WHY WE LOOK AT PICTURES

CARL H. P. THURSTON

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WHY WE LOOK AT PICTURES

A Study in the Evolution of Taste

BY

CARL H. P. THURSTON

AUTHOR OF
"THE ART OF LOOKING AT PICTURES"

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PREFACE

A few preliminary words about the plan and purpose of this book may smooth the reader's way through its pages.

It is intended first of all as a practical aid to the enjoyment of pictures. Its method is to begin with the simplest æsthetic pleasures, which lie on the very surface of a picture where they can be tasted by any casual passer-by, however slight his training and experience in art, and to lead the reader from these, by a path approximately as easy and continuous as a flight of stairs, to the rarer and more elusive pleasures which lie concealed at its heart and which can be savored only by those who have acquired some familiarity with the language of paint.

As far at it was practical I have kept æsthetic theory in the background and advanced from point to point by a succession of concrete examples, but here and there I have been obliged to let the bare bones show through. I ought, perhaps, to warn the reader who is inclined to skip these theoretical passages that to do so will make most of the following chapters harder to read.

On the other hand, I ought to warn the student of æsthetics that he will find here several contributions to the theory of his subject which he can hardly afford to neglect. Perhaps I ought also to apologize to him for disguising material of possible scientific value in so unscholarly a garb—but I had rather spend my time in persuading him to go and do likewise. I am firmly convinced that the proceedings of a science which touches the interests of the average man as intimately and deeply as æsthetics ought to be carried on, as far as possible, in a language

which he can understand and recorded in forms that he can use.

I might add that the book was designed to be studied a paragraph at a time, with frequent reference to the illustrations, rather than to be read, for entertainment, a chapter at a time.

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PART I: REPRESENTATION

CHAPTER I

THE ELEMENTARY PLEASURES

Of all æsthetic pleasures the easiest to explain are those aroused by discovering—in a cloud, a rock, or a piece of painted canvas—some resemblance to a familiar object; and because they are the easiest to explain they are better fitted than any of the others to serve as a gateway to the whole subject. I shall accordingly begin with them,—and if I should happen to give them more space than their comparatively low æsthetic value deserves it will be solely because I wish to be sure of being understood when I refer to them later in discussing the more abstruse parts of the subject.

I speak of them in the plural because there is no single "pleasure in resemblance" but a large group of them, closely related it is true, but varying considerably in type, origin, and function.

WONDER

A chance resemblance in nature—whether it is between a pair of twins, or between the face of a cliff and the face of an old man, or between a cloud and a camel—evokes, first of all, the same agreeable wonder as any other rare or unexpected phenomenon, such as an eclipse or a glimpse of a rare bird.

But the resemblance will also possess a special charm which is lacking in most of the other sights whose interest depends on their rarity: a peculiar, octopus-like power over one's attention which will not permit it to escape when once caught but entangles it more deeply at every instant. One is drawn by an irresistible curiosity to explore the likeness down to the last item of similarity.

In the case of a painting there is no shock of pleasure in discovering that it looks like something else for that is exactly what one expects it to do, but we are somehow never prepared for the *completeness* of the resemblance and that provides us with an endless chain of surprises. We can run our eyes over the canvas again and again without exhausting its possibilities of pleasure.

In time, of course, this chain of tiny pleasures fades away—but only to be replaced by a fuller, stronger stream of pleasure in the perfection of the whole work, which is somewhat different from pleasure in surprise.

DIFFERENCE

But even the enjoyment of perfection palls after a time and the artist must have some other entertainment in reserve to take its place. His problem, as the designer of a work of art, is very much like that of the designer of an electric dynamo: he must keep the current of æsthetic pleasure flowing strongly and continuously, and for as long a time as possible. Fortunately, he has discovered, in the course of the ages, that he need not do all the work himself but can call on his spectators to perform some small fraction of it. His resemblances need not be exact; if they call for some slight expenditure of mental effort to discover what they are intended to represent, so much the better, for here as elsewhere when an expenditure of effort is crowned with success it never fails to yield its quota of pleasure, and this pleasure merges with those we have already mentioned and swells the æsthetic stream. It is largely because the camel in the cloud is not an exact copy of the camel on the desert that it gives us so much pleasure. A photograph or a wax figure is rather stupid, æsthetically, because everything is done for us in advance; it leaves no scope for our imagination.

In any case of resemblance the resemblor may differ from the resemblee in two ways: in material, and in form. Difference of material is responsible for most of the pleasure of wonder and surprise,—for the ineffable mystery of the cloud that is not only a cloud but a camel as well and the camel that is not a camel at all but a cloud; but the pleasure of recognition-under-difficulties depends chiefly on differences of form, though it should be noted that a certain number of these differences are the natural result of a difference in material: the stratified rock in a cliff can never reproduce exactly the soft contours of a human face, nor the misty substance of a cloud the tough ungainliness of a camel.

In the hands of small-minded men like Dou and Meissonier the exceedingly flexible medium of paint is bent to a mirror-like reproduction of nature, but greater artists, such as Rembrandt and Tintoretto, are careful to keep at least a few degrees away from this stultifying accuracy. One might say of their most individual canvases that instead of manufacturing forms themselves they merely supply one's eye with the necessary materials and leave it to perform the final operations of assembling them into familiar objects. Dou and Meissonier, however, deal only in ready-made and highly varnished goods. In speaking of their pictures it is not so far out of place to use the ordinary careless phrase and call them "imitations" of nature, but in describing the work of greater men it is better, for many reasons, to adopt a more accurate term and speak of *representations* of nature.

Up to a certain point we may say that our pleasure in discovering a resemblance increases with the difficulty of the task, but beyond that point a higher law comes into play. A stream of water will continue to flow however low its speed may become, but if a fire is to continue to burn it must burn rapidly and if an airplane is to keep in the air it must fly rapidly, and the æsthetic experience is more like the fire and

the plane than like the water; it must move with a certain minimum velocity or be extinguished. Anything that reduces this velocity below the minimum is bad art.

ECONOMY

For purposes of recognition a great many of the details in any object are superfluous. Some we have never noticed at all—anyone would be hard put to it to draw, or even to describe, from memory the rungs of his favorite chair or the pattern of the rug beneath it—and others have never attracted enough attention to give them a permanent place in our mental picture of the object. In the rush of practical life we learn to identify objects by the smallest possible number of details, and the combination of these details constitutes our working image of the object. It is accordingly possible to give a very satisfactory representation of anything in nature by setting down on paper a comparatively small number of lines or spots of color, provided only that they correspond with the few details by which we naturally identify them.

In fact, such representations are not merely satisfactory but actually pleasing, and pleasing, one is surprised to discover, *because* they are not complete, or rather, to speak more accurately, because they seem to be complete even though they obviously are not so. The explanation seems to be that not being fully aware of the extent to which our perceptive faculties use these short-cuts to recognition we never cease to be astonished and delighted at being shown them in actual operation; they affect us like optical illusions, which we may understand perfectly but nevertheless cannot modify or brush aside. A secondary explanation may be sought, of course, in the pure pleasure of being able to construct so much meaning from so little form; this pleasure is a familiar element in our enjoyment of Gothic architecture, in which economy in the

use of stone is carried to an extreme. (Æstheticians usually avoid definite explanations altogether and speak learnedly of "the law of economy of means," somewhat as physicists used to say "Nature abhors a vacuum" instead of attempting to formulate the laws of atmospheric pressure.)

Fig. A: A baldheaded man at his desk.

The drawing in Figure A illustrates very clearly the nature of this principle and the type of pleasure it affords. In such extreme cases it yields only a single flare of pleasure and amusement, which dies rapidly to zero or below, but when used in moderation it is one of the most dependable of the artist's resources. Drawing and etching depend on it for their very existence, and it is the dominant principle in the painting of China and Japan. In Occidental painting it is used more cautiously, but very brilliant examples may be found in the work of Whistler, Sargent, Hals, and Velasquez.

I must mention a special application of this method of elimination which produces still more extraordinary results. Our perceptive activity does not end with recognizing things as such but goes on to recognize in each of them a dominant quality, varying in color and intensity from the tigerishness of a tiger to the stoniness of a rock. Each of these qualities, like the mental picture of the whole object, is made up of a few details selected from a much larger number and each of them is diluted and weakened by the presence of other details which at best add nothing to the dominant impression and may even detract from it. Now the artist, by the simple device of omitting these irrelevant details and slightly exaggerating the essential ones, may often produce something in which this dominant quality is so strong that it seems more

like nature than nature herself,—flesh that has more of the peculiar characteristics of flesh than any we have ever seen or touched, or a child that comes nearer our ideal of childhood than any we have known in real life. This is what Mr. Berenson, speaking in his "Florentine Painters of the Renaissance" of the immense solidity and three-dimensionality of the human forms in Giotto's frescoes, calls "life-enhancing," and names as the most important quality a painting can possess, if not the only one which merits serious consideration. We need not follow him quite as far as that, but the ability to produce this effect must be recognized as one of the most valuable tools in the painter's kit.

DETACHMENT

But we cannot explain all the pleasure that a picture yields by analyzing its contents. The special frame of mind in which we approach it also has a great deal to do with it. There are of course many ways in which a picture may be looked at. One may be glancing at it in a dealer's window on the way to the station, when one's mind is full of catching the train, or be measuring it for a frame, or trying to copy it. But the characteristic way of looking at it, the way in which the great majority of people will see it, is to stand in front of it with nothing to do but look at it. The painted rose within it cannot be picked, the painted mountain cannot be climbed, and the painted real estate is not for sale; one can only compare, recognize, savor, and enjoy. For the moment, one need not worry, or plan, or be on the defensive, or so much as lift a finger for any purpose whatsoever. The whole of one's consciousness is at the artist's service, ready to follow wherever he may lead. One is as free as a child at play,—and even freer, for there are no rules, or parental restrictions, or opponents, or companions, or material limitations to consider. In

such a frame of mind pleasures much slighter than those of æsthetics are able to develop into strangely exhilarating experiences, and these, at their best, never stop short of ecstasy. Through painting one becomes completely conscious of many objects for the first time since one stared at them and felt them over as a very young child; and in the exhilarating atmosphere of these rediscoveries one's mind grows youthful and springlike again, and far more capable of pleasure than in its normal phase.

CHAPTER II

FORM, SUBSTANCE, AND SPACE

When I began to speak of the recognition of qualities I did not stop to point out the differences between this process and the mere recognition of objects but they are too important to be passed over. When one looks at a few lines on a piece of paper and comes to the conclusion that they represent a pig, that is a purely intellectual achievement. The result flashes into consciousness clearly and suddenly, like the solution of a puzzle,—and it fades out almost as quickly, like the sound made by a blow on an anvil. One may return to the drawing and recognize rapidly a series of details—the eye, the ear, the snout, and the curly tail—but each of these recognitions will be completed as quickly and fade out of consciousness as soon. The jets of pleasure which they release may continue to flow and may even merge into a continuous stream but the recognitions themselves will vanish. But when one looks at the drawing and thinks, or rather feels, "What a stupid, sluggish, dirty, disgusting animal!" the process is very different. It is not so much a recognition as a direct perception. The feeling it arouses hardly ever fades immediately and may last for a long time; durability is part of its very essence. One's awareness of a quality is more like an emotion than like an intellectual achievement. Qualities have a great many uses in the æsthetic experience, but the simplest of them, and the one which concerns us most here at the beginning of the subject, closely resembles the chief function of color in painting and of musical tone in music: they hold one's attention firmly while the other more active, more characteristically æsthetic elements in the work of art operate on it. These

other elements have, in general, less power to seize and grip attention and need to be reënforced.

TEXTURE

Texture is, with the possible exception of color, the most vivid quality of matter that can be represented in paint, and is for that reason one of the first to give intense pleasure to the student of pictures. In real life, heat and cold give us more powerful sensations, but they cannot be transferred to canvas. The brilliance of the sun and the darkness of a mine are also more intense but paint can give only a feeble suggestion of them. The more general properties of matter, such as squareness, roundness, thickness, thinness, tallness, shortness, elasticity, ductility, fragility, and incompressibility, are all, at best, comparatively uninteresting and monotonously alike. No painting seems as perpetually fresh as one which includes a variety of textures. Even variety of color, considered merely as variety, is tame beside it; in paint at least, black never differs as much from white, nor even a brilliant red from a brilliant green, as the burnished solidity of one of Chardin's copper kettles differs from the dull bloom of the peach he places beside it.

The secret of this vividness is that textures are perceived primarily not through the impassive eyes but through the highly sensitive nerves in one's finger-tips. Color cannot be felt at all, in the ordinary sense of the word; shape has to be estimated in the brain from the preliminary reports of an object sent in by hands and eyes; and the other properties of matter are reported to consciousness by groups of nerves much duller and vaguer than those which lie immediately under the skin. And, by a fortunate chance, one's tactile memories of a texture can be aroused in almost their full strength by very simple means.

Textures, as they appear in painting, afford us in addition a special pleasure-in-recognition because, as we shall see in the next chapter, they are depicted by means of a particularly brilliant set of optical abbreviations, which are so very different in actual form from the things they represent that they hold one's interest for a long time. To the average man, in fact, who knows nothing of the secrets of this technique, they are little short of a miracle. He can draw, when he has to, a pig or a house that will serve their purpose fairly well, and he accordingly looks on the artist who can draw a better one as only a somewhat more accomplished craftsman than himself, but he hasn't the faintest idea of how to draw a texture and the artist who can do it seems to him as gifted as the genii of the Arabian nights. How does one catch the glint of a china cup? What, precisely, is the color of brass? And where does the subtle difference between silk and satin reside? It is a never-ending puzzle, and a constant source of wonderment and delight. Yet the connoisseur as well, even though he has a clear idea of how it is all done, can still find a keen pleasure in the mere process of expanding these abbreviations into the textures for which they stand, in transforming Sargent's broad strokes of red into velvet and Hals's splashes of white into lace.

But when one begins to hunt for beautiful textures in the great masterpieces in the galleries they prove to be surprisingly scarce. In the lesser pictures there are plenty, but not in the greatest ones. There are textures of a sort, of course, but not the dazzlingly perfect ones. Veronese, for instance, slurred or blurred all his textures a little, so that they do not stand out like new goods in a shop. Andrea del Sarto and Millet went still further, conventionalizing them so much that though they are still recognizable they do not yield any particular pleasure. Lord Leighton gave practically every object in his pictures a surface so hard, smooth, and highly specialized

that it is a clear falsification of the original texture. Monet, Monticelli, Carrière, and Greco got on very well without depicting texture at all,—although Greco occasionally painted a leaf or the white of an eye with great exactness, as if he wished to show what he could do when he tried; while Cézanne apparently took special pains to avoid it altogether. A dozen painters or so, with Chardin, Vermeer, Terborch, Kalff, and Carlsen at their head, have made themselves masters of the whole range of textures, as a great singer is master of every note within the compass of his voice, and have exhibited their virtuosity frankly and simply, but they are few in number at best, and of them all only Vermeer has any claim to a place among the very greatest. We are forced to conclude that texture, in spite of its æsthetic virtues, is not an essential ingredient in painting, and we may even suspect that some of the greatest masters have found it a handicap in their endless struggle to wring the greatest possible beauty from their medium. We may be able to discover some of the reasons for this by contrasting texture once more with shape.

SHAPE

Although the shapes of things are poor in tactile sensations, they are much more interesting to the intellect than marble, velvet, ivory, and gold. In the first place, they display a greater variety than textures. I doubt whether there are more than forty or fifty types of surface which can be clearly and surely distinguished from each other by sense of touch alone, all the rest being only repetitions of one of these; but the number of individual, clearly distinguishable shapes is nothing less than infinite. A texture, in order to be a texture at all, must be fairly uniform over a considerable surface, while a shape may, and in all but the simplest shapes must, vary at every point; every segment of it is more likely than not to

be different from all the others. Shapes, too, possess the power of combination—two, or a hundred, or a thousand may unite to form a single new shape—but textures are in this respect almost totally inert: in only a very few cases can two of them be merged together to produce a third which is different from either.

Shapes, too, can tell us much more than textures about the object they define. A texture can, at most, show what material an object is made of, or perhaps what general class of objects it belongs to; but a shape makes an excellent portrait of the object it belongs to, and oftener than not a complete life-history as well, with an account of its origin, the principal things that have happened to it, and what it is good for.

Shape means primarily the outline of an object which can be traced on a flat surface. It might be defined as that property of an object which can be expressed with a single line. The cave men drew in outline; modern children draw in outline; and outline is the thing that the majority of men care most about in art, although they may not be aware of the fact. Even in the case of an artist with as much illustrative charm as Raphael, vigorous and expressive outline is almost indispensable for popularity. Take out of the *Madonna of the Goldfinch* (Pl. 43) the line that defines Mary's head and flows down her shoulders, remove the wand-like saplings that stand guard on either side, blur a little the graceful arch of her eyebrows and the gentle lines of her hair, break the smooth square of the dress at her neck with a flutter of ribbons, turn the head of the child at her knee until the appealing chubbiness of his cheek can no longer be seen, and though all its famous reverence and sweetness and idealism would remain not one person in twenty would stop to look at it twice.

One of the commonest *clichés* of recent criticism is the statement that there is no such thing as a line in nature, and that there is accordingly no place for lines in art. The pre-

mise is not true of nature, except perhaps in some microscopic sense which concerns neither the artist nor the student of pictures, and even if it were the conclusion would still be untrue for art. The only valid test for the availability of any medium or form of technique in any representative art is the question, does it or does it not adequately represent the thing it is intended to represent? Paint itself does not occur in nature in any of the forms in which it is used in art, yet as far as I am aware no one has suggested that for this reason it would be better to discard it and paint with grass-stains, egg-yolks, and blood instead. The only permissible question with regard to line is when to use it and when to have recourse to some other medium which may serve better the particular purpose in hand.

Some things cannot be depicted at all without the use of line. I might mention cobwebs and the edge of a knife-blade. In the latter case the line may be no more than the edge of a broad splash of paint, but if it is clear and sharp it counts as a line none the less. There are other things which can be shown after a fashion without the help of lines but never so well. Renoir, for instance, could lay on smears of red paint which made very creditable lips, considered merely as physiological details in a face, but they are woefully deficient in expression. The expression of a mouth depends largely on undulations in its contours so minute that they can hardly be perceived as undulations at all but only read off intuitively as expression, and they cannot be represented except in line or some equally sensitive medium. In general, all qualities of objects which are closely related to movement or action—strength, flexibility, grace, latent energy, and the like—need for their expression one or more of the properties which are peculiar to line,—its definiteness, its continuity, or its ceaseless flow. Blake used line excessively because it was so well adapted to emphatic and uncompromising statements. Goya

was drawn to it because it could be so incisive. Dürer valued it for its precision, and Burne-Jones for its delicacy and its extraordinary capacity for expressing ideals. The fastidious Whistler loved it because it enabled him to omit all the irrelevant detail in his subject and still portray clearly and beautifully all that he cared to; and this is perhaps the greatest of its æsthetic virtues. It is the most efficient of the graphic mediums: painting in the end can express more than line, but only at a cost in extra labor and material out of all proportion to the increment of truth that it yields.

It is very hard for a beginner to understand the comparatives and superlatives which are used to describe the skilful use of line. Up to a certain point he can perceive differences in draughtsmanship, but beyond that he sees only a uniform excellence. He realizes that his own drawings are inferior to Dürer's and Rembrandt's, but he cannot see but that Charles Dana Gibson's, for instance, are every bit as good. Anything that completely satisfies him as a representation of nature seems to him a perfect drawing, and he cannot understand why other people should call one such drawing better than another. The trouble is that his standards of excellence are too low. Not being very familiar with the language of line, his eye skims over its phrases without comprehending more than a fraction of what they have to say. He is as helpless as a person who without any musical training tries to decide how many overtones he can hear when he strikes a note on the piano.

There is nothing inherently mysterious or esoteric about good drawing. A good line is simply one that has a great deal to say and says it neatly and efficiently; while a bad line is one that has nothing in particular to say and says it awkwardly, incoherently, affectedly, or redundantly. All that is needed to distinguish between them is a knowledge of the language; and as it is largely a natural language, like that of

gesture, this is not hard to acquire. Even a few hours of concentrated attention spent on its masterpieces—the etchings of Whistler, the engravings of Dürer (Pl. 84), or the drawings of Rembrandt, Holbein, Michelangelo, or Leonardo—will work wonders.

VOLUME

Line, however, effective as it is as a means of representation, suffers from one ineradicable defect: it can never make full use of more than a small fraction of the space at its disposal, for the greater part must always be left blank. And we shall never be able to rid ourselves wholly of the feeling that this blank space ought to be put under cultivation, even though, as we saw a few moments ago, any effort spent on it will be subject to the law of diminishing returns. Art tends always to press toward any maximum that seems attainable. Any medium which is able to spread over the whole of a surface will take precedence over the tenuous network of line. There will always be arts which restrict themselves to the use of line alone but, because anything in art which is discovered to be less than it might be drops automatically into second place, they will always be considered minor arts. There will always be artists in the broader medium who still cling too tightly to line but, for the same reason, they will always be considered minor artists. It would be absurd to banish line from painting altogether but, like texture, it must be content with a secondary place.

The shift from line to paint leads us to a different view of shape. With the new means at our disposal a simple outline traced on a flat surface no longer seems an adequate representation of a solid, three-dimensional object; we wish to see it in its full volume and feel all its bumps and protuberances. And volume itself has special æsthetic virtues as a subject for representation.

There was once a mental healer who advised his patients to suck an egg every morning because there was great virtue in taking into the system something the eye had never seen. There is something of this charm of the invisible in our æsthetic pleasure in the third dimension. Solidity and bulk, being hidden in the interior of things, do not flow into consciousness directly and automatically like texture but have to be grasped anew and reconstructed at every instant. Then, too, there is the extra pleasure of constructing such a bulk, with one's eye, from nothing more substantial than a few patches of paint spread on a flat canvas. This is very different from recognizing it intellectually in a bare outline drawn with pen or pencil. And the whole process is shot through with the rich muscular memories which belong to our experience with such objects. The sum-total of its pleasure is a blend of pleasure in constructive recognition with pleasure in an intensified consciousness of familiar things.

A painted texture stimulates, at most, the sensitive nerves in one's finger-tips; the shallow and insubstantial, though exceedingly beautiful, modelling in Botticelli's *Magnificat* (Pl. 44) hardly stirs more than the nerves and muscles in one's hands; but the soft rotundity of the *Madonna of the Goldfinch* (Pl. 43) sets in vibration form-memories that reverberate in consciousness like distant thunder, and to perceive the full solidity of Giotto's figures (Pl. 1) or Signorelli's (Pl. 13) is a profound experience. But memories as massive as these cannot be aroused by a mere outline drawing; only a full-bodied, three-dimensional representation can stir them to their depths.

One of the most-argued problems in modern art is, how far should a painter go in stripping the objects he depicts of their superficial characteristics, whose æsthetic value is comparatively low, in order to reveal more fully qualities such as volume and bulk, whose æsthetic value is very great. It began

with Cézanne who, in reaction against the excessive finickiness of early nineteenth century art, stripped every form that he used of texture and even of meaning, in order to realize mass and shape at their full intensity. He was like those early painters of the nude who removed everything but a loin cloth—and his followers had soon ripped off the loin cloth as well. The question was whether the truth lay with them, or with the more moderate men, such as Giotto and Greco (Pl. 16), who, although they boldly sacrificed meaning to form, still retained a modicum of it, or with the conservatives, represented by Raphael, Velasquez, Piero della Francesca, and Ingres (Pls. 53, 27, 58, 34), who did not slight the outer integuments of texture and meaning but were always careful to let the more fundamental qualities show through them. It is not a question which can be disposed of in a few paragraphs, but it will be worth while to take time to run over a few of the conditions which will determine the solution.

There is obviously no necessity for making every object in a picture a complete and accurate portrait of some object in the real world, for not one person in ten thousand will ever know, or even care, whether it is or not. For the most part we are entirely satisfied if we can recognize a painted object as a good specimen of its class; if we can say, "What a fine pig!" or, "What a well-drawn house!" we ask nothing more. We care little whether the painter worked it up in his studio from his memories of many pigs or houses, or whether he went outside and made a careful sketch from life.

But how narrow and specific must these classes be? There are clearly cases in which they may be very broad. When we see in a Corot a man and woman crossing a distant field we do not wonder whether they are young or old, rich or poor, thieves or charity workers; and the two or three birds which the old landscape painters loved to set flying across their skies may, for all we care, be crows or gulls or swallows. Rocks

and gateposts and tree-trunks can usually be divested of most of their meaning, and presented simply as shapes and bulks, without arousing much protest. There is even a certain charm in it, as there is in repeating a familiar word again and again until it has lost all meaning and become only a mysterious and awe-inspiring sequence of sounds. But when we find a human face, or anything else that is rich in meanings, reduced to some generalized shape, presented for its massiveness or angularity alone, our first reaction is an instinctive protest. We feel as if the natural balance of things had been disturbed, and for no sufficient reason. We prefer to take our pleasure in the representation of the fundamental physical properties at the expense of objects that are not so interesting in themselves.

SUBSTANCE

Volume alone is a valuable element in the graphic arts but it counts for more when it is stiffened by the great cosmic starch, matter. The insubstantial clouds of Tiepolo and Van Goyen and Charles H. Davis are fascinating; some of Twachtman's finest pictures contain nothing but drifting wraiths of matter, and many of Monet's finest things are hardly more than scintillating films of color; but as a general rule a solidly built picture, of the type of Piero della Francesca's, grips one's attention more quickly and makes a surer place for itself in one's mind. The firm substratum of matter provides, as it were, a solider roadbed for one's train of æsthetic thought to run on and the whole process goes on more smoothly and easily. This is one of the few advantages which Jordaens has over Rubens (Pls. 63, 64). The very earthiness of spirit which kept him from equalling the brilliant flights of the greater man endowed every form that he painted with a massive solidity which wins our confidence as the suave fluidity of Rubens never can.

The contrast is even more striking between Turner and Böcklin (Pls. 77, 75), and I believe that it is the insubstantiality of the former which makes it so hard for many people to enjoy him at first sight and, by contrast, gives Böcklin a preliminary advantage which he does not altogether deserve.

Many qualities of matter besides texture and weight have been pressed into service to enrich the content of paintings. Tiepolo, Sargent, and Brangwyn have exploited the crispness of cloth fresh from the loom. Dürer and Terborch paid more attention to its pliability, studying especially the properties which determined the shape of its folds. Burne-Jones loved to depict the fragility of things, Hobbema their resiliency, and Titian their plasticity. Mantegna coined matter into hard, durable forms, as if it were fluid metal under a die. Vermeer made himself master of all its properties, from fragility to mass, and put them through their paces with all the aplomb and *savoir faire* of the ringmaster in a circus. If, as has been said, a doctor could diagnose disease from a Sargent portrait, a craftsman could choose his material with great confidence from a painting by Vermeer. But all these other qualities are side issues; the central fact about matter for the painter is its mass. And whether he presents it to us with the vague monumentality of Moretto (Pl. 55) or with the impenetrable hardness of Signorelli it is never enough to merely show it to us: he must make us *feel* it.

SPACE

The space which surrounds an object gives one a very different sensation from the space which is enclosed within it. Instead of blocking the way it invites movement; instead of being concentrated it is diffuse; instead of being finite it is infinite. It cannot be perceived by touching and grasping, or even by measuring; one's memories of it are built up

through reaching and walking and climbing and star-gazing. Its mission in painting is to rescue an occasional picture from the tightness and pettiness to which the art is so liable. To come, after a row of *genres* and still-lifes, to the spaciousness of a Perugino or an F. E. Church is like stepping from a narrow street to the quiet of a cathedral. Even the glimpse of a sunlit canal through one of De Hooch's open doors is restful; and when a painter denies us this relief in room after room, as Terborch does, the atmosphere grows a little oppressive.

We are inclined to think of this unenclosed space, in spite of Professor Einstein, as perfectly uniform throughout its whole extent; but, for our eyes at least, this is not true. Whatever part of it happens to lie nearest to us will look rich and living and deep, while beyond that zone it will flatten out quickly into insipidity. Painters have reacted to this fact in various ways. Turner even exaggerated the natural contrast, arranging the objects in the first plane of his picture to give us an unusually strong sense of a third dimension and paying for it with an unnatural flatness in the remoter planes,—though it should be observed that he seldom fails to *suggest* distance out near the horizon even though he does not make us feel it. Claude achieved a brilliant effect by modifying this natural arrangement; he neglected his foregrounds in order to add the depth which naturally belonged to them to the broad, sun-filled spaces of his middle distances. Constable created not a little of his extraordinary vividness by throwing a wall of trees across the picture to cut off all the monotonous part of his space and leave nothing in sight but depth and richness.

The great painters of space counteract its tendency to uniformity as skilfully as fine cooks do the latent insipidity of soup. Ruisdael's famous *View of Haarlem* owes its fascination to the skill with which he has shown a perfectly flat country

stretching out for mile after mile—in an inch or two of canvas. De Hooch adopted somewhat the same device for his interiors. At first glance his rooms seem much shallower than Vermeer's, but as one gazes at them they slowly expand to a normal depth,—and the overcoming of this slight difficulty yields its own peculiar pleasure. Ostade blended certain layers of his space with deep shadows, and Cuyp drenched his throughout with sunlight and haze. Perugino made his so soft that to let one's eye drift back to the horizon is like watching a summer twilight fade. Tintoretto, on the other hand, filled his space with dramatic portents; it would not seem inadequate for the most tremendous cataclysms. The room in Velasquez's *Las Meninas* differs from all other painted space by its very perfection; it is not too high praise to say that it seems more like space than space itself.

There still remain to be noticed those strange colloidal mixtures of solids and space which are neither one thing or the other and are the despair of painters. Rain and snow are the simplest examples; the foliage of trees is the most complex. How is a painter to depict those thousands of fluttering green planes, which crowd the space they occupy but never succeed in filling it? It is impossible to show them all, but they must somehow be suggested. The primitives and the Pre-Raphaelites tried faithfully to draw as many as there was room for, and Ruskin is not the only person who has found this method admirable; but the balance of taste has tipped toward those solutions of the problem in which a hundred or a thousand leaves are summed up in a single epigram of the brush. Gainsborough sketched in, much more lightly than the primitives, a few scattering leaves on each branch and left the rest to the imagination. Titian and Turner ordinarily drew in full only the leaves at the margin of a spray, filling in the interior with rather indefinite splashes of color. Constable

ignored the shapes of his leaves and depicted only a mass of small, light-reflecting surfaces, set at various angles against a background of shadowy green. Corot noted the average hue of each distinctive group of leaves and set down a single misty patch of it in the proper place, letting it melt imperceptibly into the sky as if he were trying to represent not leaves alone but the tremulous mantle of invisibility which the wind is constantly trying to throw over them.

The white, broken water of cataracts and surf is almost as difficult to manage—the successful handlings range from Ruisdael's heavy lace to the fantastic conventions of Hokusai's *Great Wave* (Pl. 78)—and a woman's hair, unless it is smooth and compact, is also a puzzle, but the solutions of these and of other problems of a similar sort I shall leave the reader to discover for himself.

CHAPTER III

LIGHT

LIGHT AS A MODELING-TOOL

In the real world we build up our picture of the spatial relations between a group of objects with the aid of a variety of movements,—of head, body, and eyes,—but in looking at a picture none of these movements can help us in the least. If we wish to understand better the shapes and sizes of a group of actual objects and the distances that separate them we crane our necks from side to side or walk around them, and at every step new aspects of them become visible and new vistas open out between them. But no amount of walking around a picture will change the relations of the objects in it by so much as a hair's breadth. Again, when we shift our attention, in the real world, from a near object to a distant one we are obliged to change the convergence of our eyes, and the slight muscular movements by which this is effected seem to enrich and deepen our consciousness of the third dimension; but in looking at a painting this factor vanishes, for everything in it, from the sunlit canal seen through the open door to the pair of slippers in the foreground, is at exactly the same distance from our eyes and no such adjustments are necessary, or even possible. And with them vanish those equally important movements which change the convexity of the lens according to the distance of the object on which the eye is to be focussed. Even that peculiar vividness which results from the efforts of the brain to reconcile in a single three-dimensional image the two flat pictures, differing slightly from each other, which come in from the right eye and the left can play no part here, for in

looking at a painting both eyes see almost exactly the same thing. In short, the painter of space must make his whole appeal through a mere fraction of our ordinary power of vision, a fraction, indeed, which is not even the equivalent of normal vision with one eye. It is amazing that he can make his depths and volumes as vivid as he does.

When we examine the technical resources at his disposal we find little that he can use except perspective and light.

Perspective is the mathematical scheme by which every object in a picture is assigned its proper amount of space and kept within it. It is the structural framework of painted space—and nothing more. It is, in fact, more a science than an art and, taken alone, affords no great pleasure, except as the sight of anything well done is pleasing. Someone may cite Canaletto and De Hooch as examples to the contrary, but I suspect that their perspective, excellent as it is, owes most of its charm to the delicate veil of light through which we see it. The bareness of Dürer's *Christ Taking Leave of His Mother,* in comparison with his richly shaded *Melancholy,* reveals the limitations of pure perspective. One is the prose of space, the other its poetry. Perspective satisfies the demands of the intellect; light and shade stir the emotions. Perspective has become an indispensable minimum in the representation of space; when it is ignored, as it was in Italian painting before Ucello or as it is in certain modern works, the pictures which result seem chaotic and irritating, but when it is respected the excellence of the result is merely taken for granted.

Light facilitates our perception of the third dimension in a variety of ways. The strong shadows of full sunlight tell us a great deal about the objects that cast them and still more about the objects on which they fall. In art they serve as a partial substitute for the ability to move about and see an object from two points of view. Of all the revelations of

space by light they are the most striking. Yet these sharp, uniform shadows convey to us very little of the *flavor* of space,—hardly more, in fact, than we receive from perspective itself. They are useful in woodcuts—because that medium cannot easily depict shadows with soft gradations and sharp shadows are better than none—and even in photography and painting, when the object to be depicted is composed entirely of planes, angles, and straight lines; but when one encounters them in any of the more flexible mediums on objects that one expects to see beautifully rounded they seem arbitrary, and even false, and, unless greatly toned down, never cease to shock the eye. Horrible examples may be found in the work of Ribera and the other Naturalists, or in any amateur's kodak album.

It is only when all the light that falls on an object comes, as in a dark-room, in direct rays from a single source that the shadows on its rounded surfaces are sharp and black and impenetrable. And in nature the distribution of light is seldom as simple as this. If it is sunlight, a portion of it is scattered, at the very beginning, through the whole sky and pours in on an object from all sides, lighting up the deep, strong shadows cast by the sun itself. In addition to this, many rays of direct sunlight will be reflected onto the shaded portions of an object by its neighbors. And if the light is very strong there will be secondary and tertiary and no one can say how many more reflections caroming around from object to object in extremely complicated fashion. Indoors, where light can enter only through the windows, and walls, ceiling, and floor are waiting to act as great reflectors, diffusion is still more complete and the shadows become exceedingly soft and fine. In such a light the minutest undulations in the surface of an object are able to register their presence in fluctuations of light and shade.

If this process of diffusion could be carried far enough high-

lights and shadows would disappear, every surface of every object would take on the same uniform tone, and modeling by means of light would no longer be possible. Fortunately for the artist, however, diffusion always stops short of this perfection, and we are able to distinguish one major source of light which casts a few clearly marked shadows, and a number of minor sources which soften and modulate these shadows. And of course these minor sources cast shadows of their own, which are modified by still lesser lights, and so on as far as the human eye can carry the analysis.

Two different principles determine the amount of light which any portion of an object will receive from each source to which it is exposed. First, the nearer any part of an object is to the light the brighter it will be; this is negligible in the case of the sun on account of its immense distance from all objects but is important when the light comes from a window or a lamp or is reflected from some bright object. Second, those surfaces which receive the light squarely will be most brightly illuminated by it; those which turn an edge to it will receive hardly any light at all; and those which curve gradually from one position to the other will pass smoothly through all the intervening degrees of light and shade. And, finally, it should be noted that projections from a surface will usually intercept light from *more* sources than the surface itself and will accordingly be more brightly lighted, while depressions, on the contrary, will receive light from fewer surfaces and will therefore look darker. The working of all these principles may be clearly demonstrated by placing two or three white cards in different positions and at different angles with respect to the principal source of light in a room.

Plain sunlight, with its reflections, is sufficiently complex for ordinary modeling, but a painter who wishes to indulge in the refinements of the art must move indoors and see that his light is diffused as uniformly as possible: the *Mona Lisa* has an

outdoor background but its infinite subtleties could never have been recorded in anything but the subdued light of a studio. It is to secure diffusion, as well as steadiness, of light that a painter equips his studio with a north window, into which the sun will not shine, and makes it as large as possible so that the primary light may radiate from a large surface. Portrait-painters have nearly always preferred to work indoors because they needed all the refinements of modeling for the expression of character, and even when Bastien-Lepage ventured to take the art outdoors he did so only on gray days. Jordaens and La Tour escaped from the undeniable monotony of highly diffused light by strengthening their principal light and then supplementing it with a strong secondary light, so placed as to light up the dark side of the face and make its modeling more brilliant. Later men have gone farther in their search for novelty but have paid heavily for their boldness.

We are inclined to think of shadow, rather than light, as the chief modeling-tool of the painter, but Angelico, Poussin, Hals, Rubens, and Renoir often used it very sparingly, relying on modulations in the upper half of their scale of light to define their forms, and the effect is neither unsatisfactory nor unpleasing. Botticelli, in his *Pietà* (Pl. 8), found another escape from the routine of modeling. Everyone notes the strange impressiveness of the dead Christ, but few realize how much of this impressiveness is due to a simple inversion of the lighting. As the body lies, those parts of the breast-muscles, jaw, lips, nose, and eye-sockets which are usually in shadow are brightly lighted and the parts which are usually lighted, from above, are here in shadow; the data from which one has to reconstruct the form are exactly reversed and the effect is brilliant and startling. Dou has often produced the same reversal with a candle held waist-high, but with the source of the light so plainly visible the whole effect becomes a matter of course, and loses its mysterious power.

The possibility of representing textures in paint with astonishing realism depends largely on the fact that different materials reflect light in a great variety of ways. Of course color plays its part, as in differentiating silver from copper; and the nature of a substance may sometimes be revealed merely by the forms which it assumes: the characteristic folds in a piece of chiffon would always distinguish it from sail-cloth or velvet, and fur could never be confused with feathers. Skilful brushwork, too, is a marvelous aid in depicting textures—Velasquez, for instance, loaded his brush heavily with dry pigment to paint brocades but worked up his flesh tones with a very oily medium until they were as smooth as pats of butter—but the painter's main reliance is always on light. Coarse materials such as bark and knitted shawls reveal the structure of their surfaces by means of the shadows cast by separate flakes or strands. Flannel is finer and more uniform in texture, but still so rough that it scatters light in all directions and therefore looks dull throughout, with faint pock-marks of shadow in the depressions between groups of fibers. Silk, having a smoother surface, is a much better reflector, but the grain of its weave tends to concentrate these reflections in streaks. Satin is so smooth that if it were not for its distinctive folds it might be mistaken, in a painting, for tinfoil. Glazed china reflects every highlight in its neighborhood with a sharp glint; polished brass reflects the whole object as well as the high-light, though somewhat cloudily; highly polished silver is only a shade less perfect than a mirror. Marble is slightly translucent, onyx somewhat more so. Pearls are also translucent, but smooth and milky instead of crystalline. Glass is transparent but has faint reflections on its surface. A pool of still water is a horizontal mirror of dark glass, troubled with slight ripples.

In landscape painting we encounter still another way of using light to indicate the third dimension. It is not the mere

fact of distance that gives the mountains on the horizon their characteristic appearance of remoteness, but the soft veil of light which lies between them and us. It is the sum-total of the light reflected from the myriads of tiny dust-particles that float everywhere in the atmosphere which, mingling with the light from the mountains themselves, softens their outlines, dims their color, and blurs their details. It is because rain sweeps these particles out of the air that the mountains, after a storm, seem to have moved up nearer to us. The use of this haze in art as a means of suggesting distance is known as *atmospheric perspective*. The use of the adjective cannot be questioned but the noun is rather misleading, for this method of representing distance has no connection with the sole preoccupation of ordinary perspective: the determination of the size and place of each object *on the canvas*. Atmospheric perspective has been so universally relied on throughout the history of painting that when Segantini succeeded in rendering the great distances of the high Alps without its aid—the only satisfactory way, since haze is almost non-existent there—his achievement was considered almost incredible.

LIGHT FOR ITS OWN SAKE

In the work of the earliest painters we seldom find any surplus of light; there are no bursts of sunlight, no golden glows, and no blazing splendors of color. Light was only a means to an end; one needed light to paint by, and the shadows which it cast were indispensable for modeling, but beyond that one never thought much about it. It was at most a sort of pigment, which transformed itself completely into the object it was used to depict. And, as with gold, one used no more than was absolutely necessary.

There were exceptions, of course. Dirk Bouts adorned his pictures with lanterns, torches, bonfires, and sunsets, sur-

rounding each with a dainty little circle of ruddy light. Angelico bathed his whole scene in a supernal radiance,—although I suspect that he, too, regarded light chiefly as a pigment, a pigment especially provided by the Lord for the delineation of saintliness and heavenly bliss. Piero della Francesca (Pl. 58) unquestionably looked on light as an end in itself, a great space-filling thing that was as well worth painting as any of the objects on which it fell, but he was ahead of his time in more ways than one. The primitives in general were not interested in light for its own sake,—and this attitude has never wholly disappeared from painting, not even in the twentieth century.

This neglect of light by the painters seems less surprising, however, when one remembers how slow the general public is to see anything but objects in a picture. Often the presence of light, as a distinct entity, has to be pointed out to the beginner and he recognizes it only partially and with difficulty. Objects are tangible, useful, permanent things which force themselves on our attention at every moment, but light is variable and fleeting. For most human purposes one type of light is as good as another, and consequently few of us ever note with any exactness the differences between noon and sunset, between a clear day and a slightly hazy one, or even between sunlight and artificial light. We are sensitive enough to the quantity of light but hardly at all, without special training, to its quality,—and what we are unfamiliar with in life we do not recognize spontaneously in art.

Certain light-effects, of course, cannot be missed by the most unobservant eyes. The sunset in a J. Francis Murphy has written its name on the clouds in unmistakable colors; the shafts of light that pour into the cells of Rembrandt's philosophers are as striking as marble columns; and the bricky reds of Honthorst's firelight and candlelight could never be mistaken for daylight. Others, such as Corot's dawns or the

hot noon of Correggio's *St. Jerome,* need only a hint to make them obvious, for our subconscious memories of such scenes are complete enough to function adequately when they have once been aroused, even though they are not strong enough to take the initiative themselves. We can even learn, without too much difficulty, to recognize and enjoy certain distinctive schemes of lighting which cannot be assigned to any exact equivalent in nature—the golden glow of Giorgione, Titian, Cuyp, and Rembrandt, the silvery coolness of Veronese, Moretto, and Moroni, and the crystalline clarity of Greco and Segantini, which is so different from the "normal" light of Raphael or Murillo,—and our enjoyment is all the greater because it is in part a process of discovery and not wholly a cut-and-dried recognition. It is not altogether beyond our powers, when our interest has once been aroused, to distinguish Hals's light from Vermeer's and Vermeer's from Ostade's, and to distinguish Greco, as a master of reflected light, from Degas, as a specialist in the light that glances along a surface but barely touches it.

It is only when we encounter a painter whose eagerness to depict light has tempted him to neglect form that we run into serious difficulties. We are willing to enjoy the light in a picture whenever it comes as a bonus and does not interfere with our more habitual pleasures, but when it has to be paid for and, worst of all, paid for by a sacrifice of form and matter, most of us rise up in instinctive rebellion.

Yet the highest æsthetic usefulness which light possesses for painting depends precisely on the fact that it does infringe on form. What a representative art needs most is a series of intimate connections between the various details that enter into it, and objects are by their very nature too detached and isolated to supply these connections. The relations which can be discovered between them are at best too few, too slender, and too casual to give them the necessary cohesion. As one's

eye wanders over the picture the recognitions that pour in form a sadly jumbled stream: each one yields its own quota of pleasure and they blend together quite prettily, but one misses the cumulative excitement of discovering that each new form which meets one's eye is a vital and integral part of some great whole that comprehends them all. Only portraiture can even approach this ideal. But light, which radiates from a single source and is governed everywhere in its course by uniform laws, constitutes one huge organism whose members extend to every inch of paintable space. Every gleam that it leaves on a surface and every shadow that it casts counts first of all as a segment of the whole light-system, and only incidentally as an individual thing with a shape and qualities of its own. If such a unified organism were merely superimposed on a medley of objects the unity which it brought into the picture would still be of immense æsthetic value, but when it eats into them, disintegrates them to greater or less extent, and then proceeds to incorporate the dissociated fragments into its own organism, its importance becomes incalculable. And to this must be added the fact that light still remains, in nearly all cases, sufficiently separate from the objects which it enfolds to serve as one of those alternative interests which are as necessary in a painting, as a means of refreshing an overstrained attention, as a second theme is in a musical composition. There can be no doubt but that painted light returns many fold whatever it may have cost in form and meaning.

The conflict between light and form assumes many phases. In the simplest representations of light form suffers very little. In Poussin, for instance, it is clear that we are to regard the figures and objects as embedded in light, like flies in amber, yet they still satisfy all our demands for smoothness, firmness, and completeness of meaning. Spitzweg's warm, mellow glow softens and loosens everything that is exposed to it, but not unpleasantly. De Hooch sacrificed some depth of model-

ing to gain intensity of light, and Cuyp gave up a degree or two of realism and vitality to increase the golden warmth of his afternoons, but neither of them went far enough to create any serious obstacle to our enjoyment. Rembrandt, in his later works, allowed light to eat into the smoothness of his surfaces as if it were a corrosive acid but his genius enabled him to offset in other ways any damage that might result and we accept his method without antagonism. Correggio let part of his light penetrate the flesh of his figures until they became faintly translucent and left the rest to play over the surface like the nearly invisible flames of burning coal; surface and texture as we know them practically disappear,—but the new thing which takes their place is accepted by most persons because it is very beautiful.

But it is at this point that the conflict begins. A few persons can take no satisfaction in Correggio's flesh because it is so insubstantial, and there are more who cannot abide the glowing, opalescent amalgams of light and flesh that Renoir produced by the same method. And the sticky pomade which Henner evolved, and smeared on so thickly, is neither flesh, light, nor paint, and has little else to recommend it. The cold, gelatinous light which Paul Chabas pours so liberally over his nudes seems by its profusion to belong with these others but it somehow manages to be far less destructive, and therefore more popular. In Greco, however, light has been permitted to destroy texture altogether (Pl. 16); in Manet it has reduced everything to a uniformly smooth and glistening hardness; and in Monet light has eaten deeply into the stones of cathedrals and bridges, so that what remains is hardly as strong as pumice. This is the explanation of at least half the opposition that each of these men has had to overcome.

Texture gives way first, then form. We may detect the first symptoms of the break-up in Frans Hals, of whom it is just possible to say that when he looked at a figure he saw

not so much a smooth, continuous surface as contiguous patches of light and shade. Next come the outdoor nudes of Frederick Frieseke, dappled with the sunlight that has filtered through the trees, and, in a further stage of disintegration, Lillian Genth's. Passing through the horde of modern painters, so careless of the single form because they are so careful about the light, hurrying to record it before it changes and letting the brush-strokes fall where they will, we find at the end of the list Childe Hassam, William Glackens, Mancini, and Monticelli, in all of whose pictures matter splits up into small, dissociated fragments, and finally Turner, Twachtman, and Monet, in whose most radical experiments matter is dissolved completely in light and passes from mortal view

And beyond this lies a further stage in which, through the feverish efforts of some ambitious artist to paint the unpaintable, light itself disappears as a recognizable entity. We know intellectually that Turner's lemon-yellow glows, streaked with pink, are intended to depict the splendor of a sunset, but they do not look like a sunset and they do not give us the sensations of a sunset; they are, in fact, hardly more realistic than the mathematical symbol for infinity.

In considering these various formulas for expressing the relation between matter and light it must be remembered, first, that the general ignorance of the public with respect to the latter element gives the painter a margin of individual freedom in dealing with it such as he could never hope to enjoy if his subject were form alone. Blue sky, for instance, is always brighter than the very whitest paper can be when seen by diffused light, yet when Signorelli, or Reynolds, or Charles W. Hawthorne makes his sky a great deal darker than flesh or white linen no one is seriously disturbed, not even those who know enough about the matter to recognize the inversion. Similarly, it is not a serious fault, as faults in painting go, to show sunlight coming from two directions at once, to interject

shadows where nothing could possibly cast them, or to throw light on surfaces which it could not possibly reach. If we allow the painter to paint light at all we must be prepared to allow him considerable discretion in choosing a method of handling it.

In painting objects, the relative sizes of the shapes which are to represent them are determined with mathematical exactness by the laws of perspective: when the size of any one of them has been fixed all the others must conform to it rigorously. But in painting light the painter enjoys a much greater freedom in transcribing the various degrees of luminosity in the scene before him. He may decide, as Rembrandt did in so many pictures, to sum up all the lower intensities of light in a tone or two of deep brown, reserving all the other resources of his scale of pigments for the higher lights in nature, so that we see on his canvas a broad background of uniformly dark shadow from which stand out a few brightly lighted and powerfully modeled objects; or he may exactly reverse this process, as Turner did so often, though by no means always, and expend the greater part of his scale of pigments on the lower or shadowy portion of nature's light, leaving only a tone or two of pale color with which to depict all the higher intensities, so that his whole picture is as pale as Rembrandt's is dark. Our eyes adapt themselves to the Rembrandtian system by instinctively interpreting it as a representation of night and artificial light—the picture which has been known for generations as *The Night Watch* was actually painted at high noon—but the Turnerian system is not so easy to accept because, in spite of the evidence that Ruskin marshaled to the contrary, it is less true to nature: it does not adequately convey to us either the full-bodied nature of form or the brilliance of light. Many other formulas have been devised for translating light into terms of pigment. Monet, in the hope of capturing the dazzling luminosity of sunlight, gave up using

browns and blacks altogether; and Signac went even further in the same direction, discarding the darker blues, greens, reds, and purples as well. Whistler, when he wished to give the effect of night, omitted all the lighter hues from his palette; and Caravaggio, to emphasize the strong contrast between light and shadow which constitutes so large a part of our general impression of light, avoided the middle tones.

The essence of the situation is that no one can succeed in capturing all the properties of light in a single painting, and everyone must therefore choose which of them he wishes to depict and construct his scale accordingly. The one exception to this statement gives us the clue to the reasons which lie behind it. Only in the diffused light of a room into which direct sunlight does not enter is it possible for a painter to achieve the complete verisimilitude which astonishes us in Velasquez and Vermeer; and the one fact that makes it possible is that here the range between the brightest light and the darkest shadow does not greatly exceed the range between the whitest pigment and the blackest. The various intensities of light are not merely transcribed, they are reproduced. As soon as any brighter light or darker shadow enters into the scene this is no longer possible. In the realm of magnitudes, perspective is equal to anything; it can deal with a mountain or a molehill, and even put both harmoniously on the same canvas. But the extremes of light are not so amenable to the painter's art, for the whitest of white paints is absurdly inadequate as a representation of the blinding radiance of the sun and the blackest of blacks gives no idea of the darkness of a mine. And light changes so greatly in quality, as well as in intensity, in passing from one extreme to the other that the very brief and, as to quality, practically homogeneous scale of pigments to which the painter is confined can give only a hint of its true appearance.

And this brings us to the final, and perhaps the most con-

clusive, reason for permitting the painter of light to take what liberties he pleases with form. The fact is that light itself takes great liberties with form, blurring its sharp edges, flattening out its details, dazzling our eyes so that we cannot see shapes with the exactness to which we are accustomed, and even obliterating the familiar boundaries between objects; and since the painter's other resources for depicting the variations and modulations of light are so inadequate he is obliged to supplement them with as many of these modifications as he is able to show, however destructive they may be from the point of view of pure form.

What should be the attitude toward this new and revolutionary development of a student of painting who finds that his chief, if not his sole, pleasure comes from beautiful form, as it may be found, unspoiled, in the works of Botticelli, Raphael, and Leonardo? The answer is so obvious that it hardly seems right to take the reader's time to set it down, or even to ask the question, yet so many generations have answered wrongly, to their own irreparable loss, that it may not be such a superfluous effort as it seems. He should trust the artist. An artist is by nature a specialist in beauty, and he is likely to know more about it, care more about it, and be more sensitive to it than the average man. Beauty is the thing he lives by and he is not likely to be deceived into following a will o' the wisp; if he offers a picture to the world as a beautiful thing that is *prima facie* evidence that there is beauty in it somewhere, and anyone who looks for it sincerely and intelligently will in all probability be able to find it. When found it may not always seem to be worth the effort it cost, but the process of search has a value of its own. I could not conscientiously advise anyone, however narrow or stubborn or prejudiced he might be, to go to art merely to satisfy what few tastes for beauty he happened to possess already, for half the value of art to humanity lies in its power to awaken new desires, create new powers

of appreciation, and open the way to new outlooks, and it is the better half. Indeed, if anyone whom I knew to be a spoiled child in matters of art should come to me for advice on the subject I should probably tell him frankly that it would be better for him to keep away from art altogether, for unless he did he would be constantly encountering pictures which he could neither enjoy nor understand and they would undoubtedly cause him more dissatisfactions and rages and suspicions than the slight pleasure he might derive from the others could ever make up for. For the good of his soul it would be better to abstain from pictures completely.

CHAPTER IV

COLOR

INATTENTION TO COLOR

Color is usually the first thing one sees in a picture, and the last. Unlike light, it is in no danger of being overlooked altogether. But just because it is so obvious we are too apt to assume, as a matter of course, that we know all that can be known about it. In reality, the knowledge of color possessed by the average layman is very limited, because nothing has ever forced him to look at it carefully. He describes the foliage of a willow, a magnolia, and a spruce indiscriminately as "green," and has little notion of the rich variety of hues contained within each one. And if he happens on a picture in which this variety of color is accurately recorded, all the labor that it cost will be wasted as far as he is concerned. He may enjoy a carefully painted tree more than one done in a single tone of green, but his pleasure in it will fall far short of the possibilities of pleasure which it offers. And if the painter, with his hypersensitiveness to color, has set down boldly and freely certain color-facts to which the layman is totally blind, such as the blueness of shadows, the pleasure of the latter may turn quickly to disgust.

Yet painters continue to plunge deeper and deeper into the mysteries of color, even though it means leaving a large part of the public behind. It is partly, of course, just because the subject of color is relatively unfamiliar, for a painter of genius prefers, like a scientist, to explore unknown fields instead of ambling along well-trodden paths, but there are other and weightier reasons. Painting, as we saw in speaking of volume,

tends to occupy itself with material which can cover the surface of a canvas completely and cover it interestingly, and color meets these requirements as nothing else can. Then, too, painting, like every other art, tends to specialize in the fields in which it enjoys a monopoly instead of trying to compete with some other art on ground which is common to both, and color is the medium, or, if you prefer, the subject matter, which is most distinctively its own. And, finally, the ranks of the painters are swelled by numerous persons who, possessing the whole endowment of an artist except skill of hand, have turned eagerly toward an art in which such skill was not necessary. When painting is regarded as a form of drawing, skill of hand counts for much more than keenness of eye—anyone can see as much in nature as the most expert draftsman but few have the gift of setting it down on paper—but painting regarded as an art of color is different. Anyone has sufficient manual skill to put each touch of color in approximately the right place on the canvas but very few have eyes keen enough to tell them exactly what color to put there. I believe that the influx of these few into painting, particularly in recent years, has been great enough to increase considerably its natural drift toward color.

But what is the poor layman to do in the face of this situation? Mere acquiescence in the painter's choice of subject will not save him here, as it did in the case of light, for he is altogether too ignorant of the subtleties of color to follow the painter very far into that field, even if he were willing to. And the necessary knowledge cannot be acquired without an amount of study and concentration which would do violence to his deep-rooted belief that æsthetic pleasure should come without effort.

It seems a little odd that art, alone among human pleasures, should be expected to yield as much pleasure to those who come to it ignorant and inexperienced as it does to those who

have specially prepared themselves to understand it, but that is the general attitude toward it. Anyone who wishes to enjoy swimming, dancing, mountain-climbing, tennis, billiards, or chess expects as a matter of course to spend considerable time in learning the rules or practicing the necessary movements and realizes clearly that, even after he has become proficient, the price of enjoyment will be, on each occasion, the expenditure of considerable mental or physical effort, yet the same man will be capable of demanding that art should reveal all its depths and its ecstasies to him at first glance.

Is he right? Does art indeed form an exception to the general law that pleasure must be earned? There is some justification for this belief, for pleasure in art does differ from most other pleasures in a number of ways, the chief of them for our present purpose being that it is able to attain a much greater intensity. And the possibility of reaching this intensity depends largely on our achieving that carefree, receptive attitude so characteristic of æsthetic experience, in which pleasure pours in so bountifully and so rapidly, beyond anything we have dreamed or expected or deserved, that the mind can hardly contain it. Is it not likely, then, that the introduction of study or effort or strained attention into this beatific state will shatter it beyond recovery? or that the resort to such preliminaries will prevent it from ever developing?

But this reasoning is unsound. It is wrong in this connection, as in every other, to infer anything whatsoever about an æsthetic experience from its antecedents; nothing counts but the nature of the experience itself. As a matter of fact, æsthetic reactions do not always take place spontaneously any more than chemical ones. Just as a spark or a blow is needed to set off gunpowder and a more prolonged application of heat to initiate other chemical changes, so special knowledge or concentrated attention is sometimes needed to get an æsthetic experience under way. This preparatory stage is often laborious

and disagreeable, but it is a great mistake to confuse it in any way with the æsthetic experience itself. And when the mind finally catches fire all unpleasant memories of these preliminary efforts are burned up like kindling.

Or we may draw our parallel from music, and point out that a painting has to be *performed* as well as a musical score. It cannot be absorbed into consciousness as a whole, without any intermediary process; each line, each form, each patch of color has to be *struck*, until it resounds in consciousness like a musical tone, and, more than that, they must all be combined into smoothly flowing phrases and colorful harmonies. I must admit that it is easier to give a moderately agreeable rendering of a painting at sight and without much previous training than it is in the case of a musical composition, but it is foolish to suppose that one can treat oneself to a masterly performance, comparable to that of a Hoffman or a Paderewski in the other art, without spending years in developing one's technique. And it is no less foolish to imagine that the acquirement of such virtuosity can spoil one's enjoyment of either art.

LIGHT AND COLOR

I believe that the most successful way of acquiring a knowledge of color is to carry on an endless series of comparisons between color in nature and color in art, noting every unexpected hue in a painting and every modulation of a familiar one and trying to find the equivalent for it in nature, and, on the other hand, discovering as many varieties of color as possible in nature and watching for their reappearance in art. Hints from books will be useful at intervals, but probably less so than anywhere else in the study of painting. Partly for this reason and partly because there are already so many comprehensive books on color in existence—from Ruskin and

Chevreul to Rood and Luckiesh—I shall make my outline of the subject as brief as possible, omitting technical discussions of optics almost entirely and stopping to dwell on other topics only when they have been treated inadequately or too cumbersomely in previous works.

I shall begin by advising the reader to keep three pigeonholes in his mind in which to file his observations on color: one for the relations between color and light, one for the relations between one color and another, and the third for the relations between color in nature and color in art.

He might begin his collection by noting that two sorts of light reach his eye from every object: the light which is reflected unchanged from its outermost surface and is perceived as a glint or a sheen, and the light which before it is reflected passes through some infinitesimally thin and practically transparent layer of the object and loses some of its component hues in the process, just as if it had been filtered through colored glass,—and is scattered by reflection in an infinite number of directions instead of being sent out in a single beam. This second type of light creates what we know as the color of the object. The separateness of these two lights may be demonstrated by dropping a pebble in a dish of water or putting a painting under glass; the reflected light is then reflected from the surface of the covering material instead of from the surface of the object itself,—while the absorbed light, no longer adulterated by the other, shines out with an unexpected brilliance of hue.

As we have seen already, this second type of light, which the painter refers to as "local color," is much more valuable in painting than the first. And I might add to the reasons already mentioned the intellectual interest of its endless variety and the sensuous charm of its hues. But this does not mean that reflected light need be omitted altogether, for in a major art like painting there is always room for the lesser ingredients

as well as for the greater. Greco, Greuze, Carlo Dolci, and Paul Chabas, to name a varied list of examples, use reflected light in profusion; but it should be noted that, as with texture, the lesser men are in general more partial to it than the greater. When we find Correggio and Andrea del Sarto sacrificing hue again and again to mere luminosity it lowers them in our estimation; we feel that either might have been a colorist of the very first order, but chose instead to do something less worth while. Titian, being a much greater painter, constantly subdued his reflected lights in order to let the hues beneath gleam out in their full beauty. Cézanne went still further and banished reflected light altogether, recognizing it as a tinseled superficiality in which, absorbed as he was in a tremendous effort to realize the inmost reality of things, he could not afford to dabble. Veronese, however, managed to find a formula which had plenty of room for both light and color. Neither one seems to be subordinated to the other, and neither one hampers the other; one can see the picture as light or see it as color, and derive equal satisfaction from both; and one's eye slips almost imperceptibly from one point of view to the other.

The secret seems to lie in his recognition of the fact that, in nature, every change in the intensity of a color is accompanied by some change, however slight, in its hue. Where the light falls strong on a green robe he does not merely add a fleck of white to indicate a sharp reflection but lets the green itself grow more yellowish just as it does in nature, and where the light is less strong he gives it a tinge of blue. Light that is built up in this way does not seem superimposed on color but an integral part of it, as intimately related to it as the meaning of an object is to its form. It is possible to portray various light-effects by this means alone, without resorting to anything that could legitimately be called reflected light. Yet even when light and color are so intimately bound together it is in most cases still

possible to say that a painter's eye is fixed more strongly on one than on the other. Corot and Cuyp, for instance, clearly value color primarily as a means of depicting light, while Brangwyn just as clearly valued light as a means of generating color. If he went to the tropics to paint it was because he happened to feel like putting a loud blare of color on his canvas and knew where he could find inspiration, and if he got up to paint at dawn it was because he wished to work in softer colors for a change.

But the most important thing for the novice to observe, in connection with light, is that the colors of objects are not fixed, like their forms, but vary constantly with the nature and quantity of light that falls on them. A colored substance is really, as I have pointed out already, only a sort of *filter* for light, and the kind of light that emerges from it will depend on the kind of light that is put in. When we say that grass is green we are not stating an absolute, invariable fact but merely striking an average among a considerable variety of color-impressions. If the commonest source of light in the world were the moon or mercury-vapor lamps, with sunlight occurring only as a rare exception, our impression of the normal colors of things would be very different.

Yet the habit of assuming that colors are fixed is so strong that it blinds us to most of the variations that actually occur. Even when we look at anything as striking as a lawn streaked with brilliant sunlight, instead of noting that some parts of the grass are yellowish-green and others bluish-green we are likely to say simply that part of the grass is in sunlight and part in shadow, and go away believing that underneath the light and the shadow it still remains a standard grass-green. It is the business of the painter to rid himself of these troublesome preconceptions, for unless he can determine the exact hues which make up the scene before him he can never reproduce it satisfactorily in his picture; and any student of painting who cares

enough about the art to wish to extract the last drop of pleasure that it contains will soon find that he cannot lag far behind the painter in his perceptions.

MODIFICATION OF ONE COLOR BY ANOTHER

The color of an object may be modified not only by setting it in a different light but by placing an object of a different color in its neighborhood.

Set a blue vase in the center of the dining-room table and a glint of blue will appear somewhere on every piece of china and a speck of blue on every glass, and the sheen of the linen will be tinged here and there with blue. Set a red dish beside the vase and the fleck or tinge of blue will be joined by one of red, the red of the dish will be reflected broadly in the blue of the vase and the blue in the red, and somewhere on the linen the two reflections will perhaps unite to produce a single tone of purple. Add other colors, and the complex migrations of light between them will knit all the objects on the table into a compact little society in which every member owes a large part of its color-personality to the influence of its neighbors. Is it not likely that the sense of familiarity and ease which pervades so many of the pictures of Chardin and Vermeer may be attributed in part to the faithfulness with which they have recorded this intricate exchange of reflections? When the fainter glows or the tinier spots of borrowed color are omitted, because of haste or for the sake of simplicity, a painted room seems bare and uninviting, but when they are all depicted they impart to the scene an air of quiet and hospitable domesticity.

These exchanges between neighboring colors are, in the main, nothing more than an addition of new lights, which happen to be colored, to those which already fell on the object and were reflected from its surface. But there is another sort of modification, known as simultaneous contrast, which, because

it takes place not in the external world at all but in the perceiving eye and because its effect is spread out thin over a larger surface, is not so easy to detect. When a dark color is placed beside a light one, the dark one seems darker than usual and the light one lighter, just as when a tall man stands beside a short one the tallness of one and the shortness of the other are accentuated; when a red is placed beside a green, the red seems much redder than usual and the green much greener; and when either is placed beside a gray, the gray will appear to be strongly tinged with the complementary hue, becoming either a greenish-gray or a reddish-gray. All shadows, for the same reason, tend toward the complementary of the color by which they are surrounded—the shadows in a red dress are tinged with green and in a yellow dress with blue—their exact hue being determined partly by simultaneous contrast and partly by reflection from neighboring objects or from the sky.

These are the simplest forms of simultaneous contrast. In nature it often grows exceedingly complex and sets the painter some of the most difficult problems he has to solve in observing and transcribing color. But by way of compensation it enables him to work miracles with the rather dull pigments on his palette. Ruskin declared that he could take a brushful of mud and, if he were allowed to surround it with the proper colors, paint the flesh of a Venus with it. And by combining colors so as to take full advantage of simultaneous contrast they can be raised to more dazzling brilliancy or carried through softer modulations than a painter could achieve by any other means. If by taking some drug one could blind oneself to simultaneous contrast, the life would fade out of most well-painted pictures as it does from a landscape when the sun goes behind a cloud.

Under certain conditions the juxtaposition of two colors may result in changing their apparent distance from one's eye.

This effect reaches its maximum in the colored advertisements which are sometimes thrown on the screen during the intermissions at a moving-picture theater—I have seen specimens in which some of the letters seemed to be several feet nearer than others—but even in posters in flat colors the various hues often separate into planes that seem to lie several inches apart. Amid the complexities of painting it is not so easy for colors to detach themselves from their context and advance or recede from the plane of the canvas, but examples may be found among the sketchier works of Fragonard, almost anywhere in Cézanne, and, more particularly, in the abstractions of Macdonald Wright. The novelty of this principle has caught the fancy of many modern painters and they have tried in a variety of ways to apply it to their pictures, but thus far without any outstanding success.

THE TRANSCRIPTION OF COLOR

In discussing light in the previous chapter we considered only one of its dimensions—intensity, or luminosity. When hue has to be allowed for as well, the problem of translating light into pigment becomes more complex.

Most books on light speak of a third dimension, known as *saturation,* or *purity,* but, as a dimension, this is a fiction and nothing more. Two, intensity and hue, suffice to measure every visible quality of light. They might be defined, respectively, as that aspect of light which can be expressed in black and white and that which cannot; and there is nothing left over for which a third dimension need be provided. As a matter of fact, the concept of saturation is used to measure two quite different things: position in the series which consists of all possible mixtures between any given hue and white and position in the similar series of mixtures with black, the first of which is clearly nothing but a series that varies in hue and

the second a series that varies in intensity. Why should mixtures with white be set up as a dimension any more than mixtures with blue or yellow or brown? And are not purple, orange, and reddish-brown "unsaturated" reds just as much as pink and reddish-gray? It must be admitted that the words "saturated" and "pure" are valuable additions to our limited color-vocabulary, but as dimensions they are simply absurd.

Hue, unlike intensity, can always be reproduced exactly in paint, but painters, for a variety of reasons, often prefer to transpose all the hues in the scene before them into another key, in which each one is represented by something other than itself.

In making a poster, for example, they will usually sum up many slight variations of hue in a single patch of uniform color, and when our eyes have once accepted this principle of simplification these patches will represent the greater variety of nature very well. In painting, since it is keyed to a higher concentration of attention and to longer applications of it, such extreme simplification is not acceptable, but the original hues of nature may be modified in many other ways. Turner and Corot diluted a great many of them with gray; Teniers and Gainsborough used brown for the same purpose; and most water-colorists count on the paper on which they lay their transparent colors to dilute them with white. Rembrandt carried substitution so far that it is necessary to change the verb and say that he *represented* his colors by means of brown. And this process of substitution is not limited to neutral hues like brown. A purple cannot be used to depict a green, but in many cases a blue or a yellow can be, and *vice versa*, and in the same fashion an orange can represent either a red or a yellow. I do not say that one always consciously retranslates the brown, the blue, or the orange into the original hue for which it stands, but at least one accepts it as entirely appropriate to the particular spot which it oc-

cupies in the picture, and has no difficulty in reconstructing the original scene in spite of the fact that in the picture every hue is different. This is, of course, because the painter is as careful with his hues as a master of perspective is with his lines, keeping them all in the same *relation* to each other as the original hues from which he is working,—or, as the studio phrase has it, keeping the values good and the picture in key.

When a painter represents one pure color by another which is distinctly different from it, say a green by a blue or an orange by a red, it will usually be found that he has achieved his transposition by a process of subtraction; and the general shift to this brilliant and daring method of subtraction seems to me to mark more clearly than anything else the beginning of modern painting. When the older men had a shadow to paint they merely darkened the general local color of the object with brown, gray, or some other neutral tone; but the modern painter's method is to *subtract* a little of the local color, in order to reveal more clearly the tinge of blue or purple, or whatever it may be, which in his eyes is more characteristic of the shadow than its darkness. And to balance this subtraction he also subtracts a little of the local color from the sunlit portion of the object, thus intensifying its characteristic tinge of yellow. In extreme cases we may discover that the local color has been cancelled out entirely, our sun-streaked lawn, for instance, being painted wholly in blue and yellow without a hint of green.

Anyone who had not seen this method in operation might call it preposterous, and many thousands have when it was first revealed to them, but, after all, it does not differ in any essential from the method by which drawings have been made for the last few thousand years. The draftsman does not set down on his paper all the lines he sees in the object before him but only those which are needed to distinguish it from other objects around it or from others of its kind; and, similarly, the modern colorist has discovered that it is not necessary to set

down all the ingredients which enter into a given hue but only those which distinguish it from its neighbors. And since his method works and works brilliantly, as soon as one's eyes have grown accustomed to it, there is really very little to be said against it.

The modern school of painting also differs from its predecessors in its way of mixing colors. The older men, with a few brilliant exceptions, mixed their colors on the palette and covered any spot on their canvas with the exact hue which they wished the spectator to see there. The moderns, following the lead of Monet, are more inclined to put the raw ingredients of the desired hue directly on the canvas in the form of dots and splashes of paint so small and so close together that at a distance of a few feet they coalesce on one's retina in a single hue. It is interesting to note that this method is in line with two of the strongest drifts in the recent evolution of painting: first, the tendency to leave as much as possible of the task of recognition to the spectator instead of supplying him with forms, or even colors, ready-made; and second, the tendency to force the spectator to move further and further from the canvas in order to see it at its best.

This method involves considerable sacrifices, especially in form, texture, and solidity, but without it we could never have possessed the soft, lustrous surfaces of Monet, Childe Hassam, and Walter Griffin, or the subtle fascination of Charles W. Hawthorne's modeling, or the beauty of Paul Dougherty's seas, and I am sure that these are worth more to lovers of painting than the academic pieces which the same men would have produced if they had clung to the familiar modes.

CHAPTER V

FOCUS

WITHIN THE PICTURE

Everyone instinctively assumes, until he has been taught better, that the world looks to every other pair of eyes exactly as it does to his. If he comes across a painting in which the world wears some other aspect he invariably attributes this departure from the norm to some defect on the part of the artist,—to lack of skill, to a vain desire to be thought original, to innate perversity, or to insanity. When the facts of color-blindness, short-sightedness, and astigmatism have been brought to his attention, together with some of the more sentimental theories of the nature of genius, he is likely to swing to the other extreme and assume that every artist, from Giotto to Picasso, paints as he does because his eyes see the world in that way and will not permit him to paint in any other fashion. The truth lies somewhere between these two positions. Some optical peculiarity or some odd habit of vision may account for part of the individuality of a painter's style, but the rest must be explained in terms of his temperament or the free play of his creative activity. And it is generally safer to assume that this is by far the larger part, that it is only in terms of paint that he sees strangely and only his mind's eye that is unique.

Many of the choices which an artist must make, such as that between line and color, will be largely determined for him by influences over which he has no control. Some special skill of hand, some marked sensitiveness of the eye, or some affinity of temperament will predispose him toward one or the other.

Thinkers, idealists, and practical men, men of active imagination and men of action, gravitate naturally toward the possibilities for precise expression offered by line, while dreamers and all others who live mainly in their senses and in their emotions have an antipathy for precision and drift toward the cloudier realms of color. If a man is born into one school of painters he will be swept irresistibly in one direction and if he is born in another school he will be swept no less strongly in the opposite direction; the Florentines of the fifteenth century, whatever their natural endowments, became masters of line and the Venetians of the sixteenth masters of color. In ages in which local forces are less dominant the deciding factor may be a theory of art or some special medium, such as fresco or pastel, which forces the painter to concentrate on one of these elements at the expense of the other.

But it should be observed that this choice between color and line has to be made whether it is predetermined or not, for if the painter should tell his story completely in both mediums, on the same canvas, his picture would become a tautology and would appear, according to circumstances, either as insipid as a colored photograph or as confusing as a double exposure. Mantegna and Burne-Jones, when they focussed so sharply on line, were careful to keep their color subordinate to it, and most modern painters who focus chiefly on color introduce no lines at all except the natural contours of their brush-strokes. And of most of the other alternatives that confront the painter the same two things may be said: first, that a choice must be made, and, second, that it must be a deliberate choice. Art gives to the painter more opportunities for outright choice than for compromise; his task, to speak in optical terms, is to focus sharply on a single subject rather than to widen the angle of his lens until it takes in everything in sight.

Earlier generations were more interested in those focusing operations by which painters choose their subjects than

in any others, only they did not think of it as focusing but as a choice between a few very definite types of subject, known as History, Genre, Portraiture, Still-life, Landscape, and the like. We, however, are not able to divide the subject-matter of pictures into such watertight compartments. We see historical painting slipping imperceptibly into portraiture by way of Velasquez's *Surrender of Breda,* Terborch's *Peace of Münster,* and Botticelli's *Adoration of the Magi,* and portraiture slipping into genre by way of the many fashionable portraits which depict nothing but women of a conventional type absorbed in their daily task of looking aristocratic, and genre merging into portraiture by way of Jordaens's *Bean Feasts* and Jan Steen's realistic sketches of life in his own home; we are aware that all three of these groups, history, genre, and portraiture, pass by equally easy steps into landscape,—for it is not always easy to say in Corot, Brangwyn, Böcklin, and Millet whether the figures are merely a detail in the landscape or the landscape merely a background for the figures; and we find it no less difficult to draw a sharp boundary between still-lifes, animal-pictures, and interiors, or between any of these and any of the others. There are always transitional cases which, by any objective definition we can formulate, belong as much to one group as to the other. We can only say of such pictures that the painter seems to have focused on one aspect of his subject more sharply than on the other; and if the once all-important topic of classification still retains any interest for us it is only as an illustration of the necessity of bringing every picture to a focus of some sort instead of leaving it vague and chaotic,—and as a means of discovering some small part of the creative purpose which impelled the artist to produce it.

With our natural bias for technical processes, we are inclined to take a greater interest in the strictly optical types of focus which enter into painting,—in focusing as it might be

done with a camera. The primitives, we discover, adopted a universal focus. Every object in Boticelli's *Spring* (Pl. 23) is shown with equal sharpness; the tiniest flower is painted as clearly and carefully as if it alone were to constitute the whole picture. No one can determine on optical grounds alone which objects and which figures are cast for major rôles in the composition and which were allotted minor parts. But as early as Raphael (Pl. 53) we see intimations of a change. The lesser figures, and the less important details in the others, are left just a little out of focus, so that our attention, finding the more important ones easier to look at and more interesting, returns to them again and again, just as the painter intended.

In later pictures we find a single point, or at most a small area, of the canvas brought to a clear focus while the rest decreases in sharpness as it recedes from this center; and experience shows that pictures with such a center of interest are, in general, more interesting than pictures which are everywhere uniformly sharp. The difference between the two types is like that between an advertisement surrounded by plenty of white margin and one in which every inch of space is crowded with print. The more clearly a picture rises to a focal climax in some central point, the further it departs from chaos and the more it partakes of the nature of an organism. The single focus is one device more for attaining the artist's great goal,—organic unity.

But in recent years painters have had a tendency to overwork this useful aid, chiefly by throwing the subordinate parts of their pictures so far out of focus that there is no pleasure at all in looking at them. Some have even gone so far as to double every line that was not in sharp focus, because, forsooth, if they were lines in the real three-dimensional world we should receive a double image of them! Beyond a certain point there is no advantage in decreasing the visibility of the peripheral objects in a picture, for the very slight gain in or-

ganic unity can no longer make up for the great loss in direct interest. The most that can be said for such excesses is that they are an honest but pedantic fumbling after realism.

This should not be confused with the procedure of the typical colorist, who throws every object more or less out of focus in order to force the spectator to find his chief pleasure not in shapes, nor lines, nor textures, nor meanings but in colors and the combinations of colors; nor with the procedure of the typical Impressionist, who keeps each of his separate objects a little out of focus, optically, in order to secure a sharp *æsthetic* focus on the *whole* which they unite to form,—who, in other words, if he is painting a wood had rather give the spectator the impression of looking at a forest than show him any of the individual trees. In art, the whole is never quite the same as the sum of its parts; one can never arrive at it merely by looking at one detail after another until one has seen them all; it is necessary to focus sharply on the whole as a whole in order to see it at all. That is to say, one must learn to hold all of its parts in consciousness *at once*. This is not easy, any more than it is easy to juggle seven balls in the air at once; it takes considerable practice. Yet it is not forbiddingly difficult. Ask anyone, without warning, if he can look at seven trees as if they formed a single object and the task is likely to sound appalling, but when you suggest that they may be standing in a row or in a ring it begins to seem easy enough—no harder, in fact, than looking at thousands of leaves and branches as a single tree—and when this point has been reached it is easy to take the next step and see them as a single (æsthetic) object however irregular their arrangement may be, and even to combine them with the clouds above and the road and fence beneath in a still more comprehensive object. In art we are not confined to the practical rule that an object is a thing whose parts all move or act together; here an object is a thing whose parts can all be

perceived together. A combination of trees, clouds, fences, and road may make a better object, in the æsthetic sense, than a crazy quilt or the architectural jumble of a city street. Certain purists declare that this looking at the whole of a work of art is the only reaction to it which deserves the name of æsthetic experience, but it seems to me that the pleasures afforded by its various details are as essential a part of this experience as the introductory passages are of a musical composition. Of the all-important transition from the details to the whole I shall have something to say in a later chapter.

To-day we call the tendency of an artist to focus on the whole effect of a scene at the expense of its parts Impressionism. The word did not come into use in this connection until the advent of Monet, Renoir, and their colleagues about fifty years ago, but as soon as it was realized that many of the older masters had also been primarily interested in wholes and had painted parts only incidentally the use of the term was extended back through century after century, almost to the beginning of modern painting. Although the results of this practice had been vaguely apprehended it had never been either thoroughly or widely understood, and the new word became a powerful tool both for criticism and for appreciation. It threw a new light on Constable, Goya, Greco, Velasquez, Holbein, and Titian to call them Impressionists. It explained some of the difficulties in Botticelli to say that he was an Impressionist in line who, in drawing his long, sweeping contours, sacrificed a strict accuracy in detail to some general effect of movement or feeling. And it even went far toward rehabilitating Cranach to point out that in spite of the ludicrous wrongness of most of his parts his wholes had a habit of being amazingly right.

Another type of focus which has played a considerable part in the development of painting is the focus in time. The primitives had no notion of such a thing. They thought nothing of

combining in a single group saints and martyrs from a dozen centuries and portraying all of them with the features and costumes of their own contemporaries, or of representing several stages of a miracle in different parts of the same panel as if they were all taking place at the same moment. In *The Joys of the Virgin* Memlinc even packed all the principal incidents of a whole life into a single canvas, merely separating them, for the sake of clarity, by walls, hedges, and gates. Giotto's landscapes might be assigned to any moment between sunrise and sunset and to any of the last three geologic periods; and although Piero della Francesca, Correggio, Claude, and Cuyp are more precise in this respect one has to leave two or three hours margin in dating them by the clock and two or three months in dating them by the calendar.

By 1500 it was fairly well understood that it was better to limit a picture to incidents which might all have happened at the same instant of time, but this was no more than a negative ideal. The notion that the desire to portray the instantaneousness of such a moment might become one of the principal motives in painting had hardly dawned; the *Mona Lisa*, the *Sibyls* of Raphael and Michelangelo, and the portraits of Holbein are as essentially timeless as the Hermes of Praxiteles or the Charioteer of Delphi. Botticelli, Correggio, and even Memlinc had, it is true, been peculiarly sensitive to the charm of a fugitive moment, and much of the fascination of Brueghel depends on the fleeting quality of the actions and expressions he chose to paint, but not, I think, until we reach Frans Hals do we find anyone who seems to have painted transitoriness for its own sake. Every expression that he recorded looks as if it had appeared on the face that wears it only an instant before; and every one, whether it is quizzical, haughty, boisterous, or only attentive, seems to contain already the germ of the new expression which is about to replace it.

Terborch also focussed on a single moment of time, but in

a different way. His time cannot be read from any single face, and his moments are not so brief as Hals's. But one feels that at this particular instant of time many strands of the lives concerned have converged and been knotted together, and that as soon as it has passed they will separate and never meet so intimately again. Every moment that Hals has painted will recur many times in the life of that particular sitter, and probably in the lives of a dozen others, but each of Terborch's is unique; just this combination of emotions will never occur again, in these lives or in any others. He has advanced quite as far as Hals from the naïve indifference to time of the primitives, although in a different direction.

Hals and Terborch read time only from human hands and faces. That larger timepiece whose faces are the earth and the sky and whose hands are sun, moon, and stars, clouds, snow, and rain, winds, plants, flowers, and leaves had to wait nearly two centuries more before it found its Hals in Constable and its Terborch in Corot. But when they came they did their work so thoroughly that it has seemed essential ever since for painters who made any pretence to realism to date their pictures with hour and season. Monet, with his habit of taking a dozen canvases when he went out to paint and shifting from one to another as soon as the light had changed perceptibly, is the classic example of the modern spirit.

This evolution, in various fields, from the universal focus of the primitives to the narrow, specific focus of the moderns has perhaps impoverished the individual picture but it has unquestionably enriched the art of painting as a whole. When one passes a ray of white light through a prism no single one of the colors that emerge is as bright as the original beam but the effect of the whole spectrum is immeasurably finer; and each color, as an essential note in this splendid scale, seems much more interesting than the original white did in its soli-

tary and rather monotonous brilliance. So too the pictures that have been brought to a very definite focus will seem more vivid and more individual than the universal-focus picture of other days. Some will be considerably weaker and less interesting than the rest, as yellow is chromatically weaker and less interesting than red and blue, but even these will add their units of variety to the whole scale, and since none of the stronger ones could ever perform this particular task in their stead the art of painting would be so much the poorer if they had never appeared. Hals's brilliant snapshots cannot twine themselves about one's affections like Memlinc's meandering narratives, and the most excellent landscapes of Monet and Corot fail to thrill one with the majesty of nature as even the least of Church's microscopically handled panoramas do; the humblest picture, if it is well done, cannot be spared. We are learning gradually to take our æsthetic pleasures, at least occasionally, in separate courses instead of insisting that the whole menu shall always be served up in one great goulash; and we are the better able to do this because we have learned that this self-denial need be only temporary, and that any particular æsthetic flavor that our taste may suddenly crave can be easily obtained by moving on to the next gallery. If we were not conscious of such a reserve-supply we should be more wolfish in our demands. If the Italian Futurists had dynamited all the museums, as they proposed, they would have destroyed just that accumulation of æsthetic capital which provided the chief justification for their own highly specialized experiments.

Likewise, if painting were the only art we knew we should demand from every picture not only the pleasures which belong especially to painting but as many as possible of those which we now obtain from music, sculpture, poetry, and dancing; but since these arts exist independently painting is left free to specialize in its own particular field. It is perhaps because Greek painting remained comparatively immature, and

therefore incapable of fully satisfying the normal human hunger for color in art, that the Greeks of the classic age demanded color in their sculpture, while we, satiated with color by the masterpieces of many centuries, ask sculptors for form alone and find colored statues somewhat confusing.

OUTSIDE THE PICTURE

Every picture has its focus with respect to the mind of the spectator as well as a focus with respect to its subject-matter, and no one can see it at its best until he has succeeded in placing himself at this point,—or rather points, for, as in the case of the other type of focus, there are several, of various sorts.

The easiest kind to reach are the foci in space,—the particular points in the room in which a picture hangs at which, for one reason or another, it shows to the best advantage. For a Corot, this focus is very sharp; move only a few inches nearer the picture, or away from it, and its beauty begins to fade. But a Perugino remains in focus through a distance wide enough to be called a focal zone; and there are, in fact, several of these zones. The first one ends, say, sixteen inches from the canvas, after which the picture begins to lose a certain indefinable warmth which seemed to radiate from it as long as one stood closer. The second zone ends a foot or two further away, and when one has stepped outside it the dreamy ethereality which is so characteristic of Perugino's figures can no longer be clearly felt. But just there begins the third zone, in which the strange beauty of his space exerts its highest power, and this extends perhaps twenty feet further, but beyond this distance none but the largest Peruginos offer much to the spectator but charming color and agreeable memories of closer views. Similarly, a De Hooch has two focal zones. When seen from a distance of from two to four feet it is a

warm and subtle representation of the flow of sunlight within a room, but when one stands eight feet or so away from it both the warmth and the light have faded and we behold instead an extraordinarily accurate picture of three-dimensional space.

Most of the older painters tried to construct pictures which would offer something interesting to the eye at any distance, but the more recent men have been inclined to neglect the shorter focal distances altogether, or rather to sacrifice them for the sake of getting more brilliant effects at long range; they have painted, in other words, for exhibitions, museums, and mansions rather than for ordinary homes. The crude, intense colors of Brazda and Svabinsky, for example, are chaotic and almost meaningless at any distance less than ten feet, but at twelve they begin to transform themselves as if by a miracle into an impression of a flaming tropical noon, and at twenty they are as soft and harmonious as anyone could wish. Anyone who has a chance to study such a long-focus picture in a wide gallery, opera-glass in hand, can learn more about modern painting than he could by any other method, short of becoming a painter himself. Move backward and forward in front of it, examining it at every step, first with the unaided eye, then through the glasses, and finally through the wrong end of the glasses. Apply the glass to one eye and manipulate it so that the hues which it reveals will appear to lie just beside the same hues as seen by the other, unaided eye. Compare these two versions of the picture carefully, color by color, and try to determine just why they differ so greatly. I might hint that the chief factor is the decrease in size of each patch of color as one recedes from it. One after another grows too small on the retina to retain its individuality and becomes merged with the surrounding patches, dissolving its own hue in theirs and modifying each of them accordingly. When this process has been carried far enough, extremes of tone and hue are cancelled out and the colors throughout the

picture grow soft and harmonious, yet these new tones possess a brilliancy and a purity which can never be imitated by a direct, physical mixture of pigments.

It does not require a great deal of experimentation to adapt one's eye and one's mind to the long-focus picture, and it is not excessively difficult to discover that a picture has two or even three foci in space; nevertheless, it would save considerable time and a great deal of misunderstanding if painters would indicate on the frame of each picture the distance from which they wish to have it viewed, just as a musician indicates by means of a metronome number the tempo at which he prefers to have his composition played.

In most cases this focal point will lie directly in front of the picture, but many large altar-pieces are designed to be seen from a point considerably below the picture, and murals and ceiling-paintings are expected to look well from a considerable variety of angles. It requires a great deal of knowledge and experience on the part of the artist to adjust his composition properly to these abnormal conditions, and mural painting has consequently become almost a distinct art in itself.

In addition to these foci in space, most pictures have a number of foci in time, but these are not quite so easy to reach. The first of them, for instance, can be attained only after a much longer application of attention than most people are in the habit of giving to a picture. It is situated at just that moment of time, somewhere within a long *tête-à-tête* with a picture, at which the composition yields its maximum of pleasure and beauty. No picture looks quite the same for two seconds in succession; the lines and shapes and colors and meanings that caught one's eye in the beginning fade into the background and others loom up to take their places, and the simple constellations in which they first appeared break up leaving them free to recombine in nobler forms. Lines begin to combine not merely with lines but with colors and mean-

ings as well; the most unlikely relationships between one element and another flash into consciousness till, as one approaches the focus, the picture becomes as different from the patchwork of color that first caught one's eye as the rendition of a sonata on the piano is from the printed pages of the music. And this full, glowing thing cannot be seen by anyone who has not traversed all the preliminary moments that lead up to it; some can pass through them faster than others but the very swiftest cannot leap over them with a single glance; a certain acclimatization is necessary for the fullest enjoyment of painting. For the average layman an hour—the time one devotes to a symphony as a matter of course—is not too much to give to one of the great masterpieces of painting.

I suppose the principal reason for this is that a great painting is not produced in five minutes, nor even in ten. The painter works and broods over it for hours at least, and sometimes for months and years; and by the time it is finished nothing in it looks to him as it did when he began. Everything has taken on new values and new meanings, and it is these values and these meanings that he has in mind when he lays on the last touches that bring it to a conclusion. Anyone who leaves the picture before similar transformations have taken place in his own mind never sees the picture that the artist himself had in mind but only a crude approximation to it. Naturally, these transformations take place more rapidly in the mind of the spectator than they did in the mind of the artist, for much of the artist's labor is directed to precisely that end, yet at best they require considerable time and attention. But this is not a hardship peculiar to painting. Every art demands that its devotees be rich in something and be prepared to spend it freely. Opera seems to belong to those who are rich in worldly goods, the rest of music to those who are rich in emotion, and poetry to those who are rich in imagination; painting happens to demand instead a wealth of attention. The greatest painters

will always paint their greatest pictures for those who can dream themselves into them to unfathomable depths, disregarding completely the æsthetic needs of lesser spirits; this is not a wilful choice on the part of the painter but the inexorable working out of one of the profoundest laws of his art. It is sad that anyone at all should be excluded from the inner courts of so great an art, but the poor in attention can always console themselves with the theater and the movies, or with the many modern pictures whose time-focus is so short that they begin to please almost instantaneously,—and yield up their whole content of pleasure in a very few moments.

There is also a long-range focus in time, whose attainment is a matter of years rather than of minutes. Every great picture has its own blossoming-time in the life of an individual; for a year or two, or perhaps only for a day, it glows with a divine radiance, and then fades slowly into the light of common day. Watts, Böcklin, and Rossetti are most resplendent at some period in one's youth; Giotto, Piero della Francesca, and Velasquez seldom come into their full heritage of appreciation before maturity. One sees Greco, Zurbaran, and Masaccio at their best whenever the years happen to bring the peculiar experience of life and art which is needed to illuminate their qualities. The greatest artists have something to say to every age and every condition of life but even they take on for some brief period in every individual life a grandeur and beauty to which they never rise again.

The general silence of criticism with regard to this natural focus is one of the worst sins that can be laid at its door. The critic is always giving tongue on the trail of some value which, when captured, is to be equally valid for all men at all times. In the heat of his enthusiasm he forgets the law of growth and evolution which is the most profound fact in every field of human experience and talks only of absolutes and universals. I do not deny that there are such absolutes, but merely con-

tend that they are remote from the vital æsthetic experiences of the greater part of the people who take an interest in painting. They may loom up on the horizon like distant Everests, to which the beginner hopes his steps will ultimately lead, but his immediate problem is to surmount the foothill which lies directly ahead of him. The art which concerns any individual most is that in which he can, for the moment, live most fully and most deeply, and to try to bulldoze him into devoting his time to some other group of works merely because the latter are generally considered to be "great" is quite as bad as trying to change his religion or his politics by the application of brute force.

An absolute in æsthetics is essentially nothing but a common goal toward which a great variety of evolving tastes converge. It does not matter who stirs a man most strongly in the beginning,—Burne-Jones, Landseer, Murillo, or Angelico, —in the end, if he goes far enough, it will be Titian, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Tintoretto, Vermeer, Giorgione, and half a dozen more, and no one list will vary greatly from any other. But it is as great a misfortune to be hurried through this natural development too rapidly as it is to grow up too fast along any other line. To drag a boy past the painters whose chief splendor is that they are eternal embodiments of youth, or to spoil them for him by making him think he ought to despise them a little instead of yielding himself to them with abandon, is not only to deprive him of a pure and legitimate æsthetic pleasure but to take from him something that is probably as necessary to a well-rounded æsthetic adulthood as a child's fairy tales and a boy's gangs and games are to full adulthood in the practical world. And it is a loss that cannot be made up later, for we are æsthetically young but once. And a worse danger lurks in this forcing process: the probability that the victim will become a confirmed hypocrite—and a hypocrite in the one field of human activity in which hypocrisy

pays the lowest dividends—and that his æsthetic growth will not only be stunted but most probably stopped altogether at the point at which hypocrisy set in.

There is one more focus in time, with a still longer range; it is the point, not in the life of a single individual, but in the much longer life of the picture itself in which it seems to reach its high-water mark as a work of art. There will always be one generation, among the many that pass before it, which will understand it better than any of the others and will therefore respond to it with a finer enthusiasm. It may be the generation under whose eyes it came into existence, or it may be a generation that comes on the scene centuries later. Botticelli was most appreciated, during his lifetime, in the decade between 1480 and 1490, sank rapidly in reputation during the last twenty years of his life and remained in oblivion for nearly four hundred years, and then rose to perhaps an even higher pinnacle between 1870 and 1920. Chardin, Vermeer, Greco, Caravaggio, and Velasquez have all waxed and waned over almost as wide a range. Some rise sharply to a dizzy peak of fame and power and then decline steadily into insignificance, while others, such as Albert Ryder, Blake, and Cézanne, rise very slowly and do not reach the apex of their fame till many years after they have ceased to paint. One can attain a focal point of this sort only by entering into the state of mind of a generation quite different from one's own, and this is not easy even for one well endowed with imagination; for the average lover of pictures the results of such an effort to project himself into another age will hardly repay the labor it will cost, but the full-fledged connoisseur will always want to see his favorite painters not only through his own eyes but also through the eyes of whatever ages found them most congenial.

Every picture, too, is focused more sharply on some one temperament than on any other. Any personality which contains this temperament will take fire at the sight of the picture

like paper under the concentrated rays from a burning glass. A personality which contains some part of this temperament but not all will find the picture interesting, and this interest will expand easily into æsthetic excitement. And a personality which lies entirely out of range will more likely than not be left cold by it, as a Puritan is by Rubens or a *bon vivant* by Burne-Jones. Most people instinctively assume that any focus of this sort which does not fall naturally within their own temperaments is as utterly out of their reach as the mountains of the moon, and there is considerable truth in their assumption; yet it is not the actual shift to another man's point of view, for the purposes of æsthetic enjoyment, that is so difficult, but the preliminary grasping of the idea that such a shift is possible. When the thing has once been conceived and planned it is already more than half accomplished.

CHAPTER VI

MOVEMENT

THE VALUE OF MOVEMENT IN PAINTING

When a painter has set down on canvas the shape, color, and texture of an object, and the light that falls on it, he will still be casting about for some other quality in it which might add interest to his picture. He often finds this increment of interest in motion; for motion has the great æsthetic advantage of increasing the meaning of a figure without adding a single brush-stroke to the paint which is needed to represent it,—the portrayal of movement requiring, in general, only some slight rearrangement in the parts of the moving object or in the objects around it. To show, for instance, a rock bounding down a hillside the artist needs only to change its position, and perhaps give some hint of the destruction it has wrought already, yet by doing so he greatly increases its interest for us because he forces us to imagine not only what it has done already and what it is about to do but even its actual motion, which we do not see at all.

Even more interesting are those objects which do not yield as stolidly as a stone to the forces that act on them but offer some visible resistance. In looking at a river one not only sees the movement but feels the weight, the inertia and the viscosity of the water, which tend to retard this movement. In watching a sapling bending before a storm one feels not only the violence of the wind but the resiliency of the living wood that struggles against it. Instead of watching something move easily and inevitably toward its appointed goal we find ourselves absorbed in a perpetual conflict; we take the part

first of one contestant and then of the other and feel the quality of both more keenly for this alternation.

But most interesting of all are the living things that move under their own power. Here one's eye is apt to be caught at first by the more violent manifestations of life, such as the stark ferocity of Rubens's hunters and murderers, the serpent-like strength of Franz von Stuck's nudes, or the torrential impetuosity of Tintoretto. They never wholly lose their power over one's imagination, yet one finds oneself, as the years go on, taking less pleasure in crude displays of unrestrained force and more in the easier, more graceful movements of life. Perhaps the basic reason for this evolution is that life itself is more interesting than any of its manifestations, and life can reveal itself more fully in rather quiet movements than in its more volcanic ones. These more powerful outbursts usually have too much in them of the unconscious, undifferentiated forces of nature and too little of the distinctive qualities of life; they hide life from view like huge, trembling masses of clouds, while the gentler movements of living things are only a thin veil thrown over it. And particularly in the art of painting, whose whole existence is comprised within a thin film of pigments laid on canvas, plaster, or wood, movement that is lithe and gentle, like Correggio's, Tiepolo's, and Blake's, seems more at home than the human thunderbolts of Tintoretto.

Movements in inanimate nature are, in general, uncontrolled and homogeneous, but in a living form they are more highly differentiated, subject to more restraining and directing forces, and related to each other in more complex fashion. The movements of living tissue are not uniform but unified; and in any one body each movement is proportioned to every other and all coöperate for the execution of some common purpose. An intricate system of movements of this type approaches, in itself, much closer to the nature of a work of art than any group of inanimate movements, and therefore makes a much more

fruitful subject for the artist. As painters of movement, Corot, Hobbema, and Ruisdael must, by the comparative poverty of their material, fall short of the achievements of Sodoma, Botticelli, and Michelangelo.

There are two principles of unity at work among the movements of living things. One is an instinctive and unconscious correlation between the various parts of the living mechanism; the other, an effort to bring them all under the domination of a strong, conscious will. At first one is likely to prefer the former, for its smoothness, harmony, grace, and ease—and, among painters of movement, men like Correggio, Sodoma, and Luca Giordano, who possess a special gift for recording it—but sooner or later one grows hungry for unity of the other sort and turns elsewhere to find it. Correggio's gestures (Pl. 52) are spontaneous and beautiful but there is little trace of human will behind them,—only the instinctive impulses of an animal; the nerve force seems to flow through those sensitive muscles as simply as water in a brook. The strange vortex of saints which wheels about the great dome at Parma like a flock of restless birds is no chance composition but a perfect expression of the limitations and virtues of Correggio's peculiar genius for the representation of movement. Sodoma has created some of the most delicious movement that can be found in paint,—though our illustration (Pl. 18) does not show him at his best in this respect,—but there is even less of purpose and of will in it than in Correggio's and it leaves some profound hunger in one's mind unsatisfied. Where Correggio's people are vivacious his are merely indolent; if they move gracefully it is not because, as with Correggio's, they take a special delight in doing so, as if it were a form of dancing, but merely because that happens to be the type of movement that calls for the least effort. They are sensuous beings, but not aggressive ones. Luca's graceful puppets must be ranked still lower on the scale of volition; in fact, it cannot truly be said that they move by their own effort

at all. Their legs and arms occupy positions which suggest movement but it is not their own will which has placed them there but the will of the painter; they are merely dressed in movement as the demands of the story require. One may occasionally get an illusion of motion from them, but since it is not fed by any inner springs of consciousness it vanishes as quickly as it came.

Botticelli's movement (Pl. 23) has much in common with Sodoma's but is greatly superior to it in this matter of a directing will; every gesture expresses either a desire or a purpose, and none seems either superfluous or ineffectual. Jordaens possesses the same advantage over Rubens (Pls. 63, 64) and Teniers over Brouwer. But the great master of the control of movement is Michelangelo. In any one of his figures (Pls. 48, 67) the limbs and muscles, down to the smallest, are organized and coördinated as perfectly as an army, and one feels that the will in charge of them is maneuvering them with the skill and decision of a great general. It is perhaps the most solidly and most durably satisfying of all painted movement.

Benozzo Gozzoli came too early to make himself completely master of arms and fingers and legs—they are apt to straggle off on adventures of their own which are not always perfectly coördinated with the purpose that dominates the rest of the body—yet in spite of this he somehow managed to become a great painter of the application of movement to specific ends, or, in other words, a great painter of work and of the movements involved in work. The walls of the Campo Santo at Pisa constitute a great epic of human labor. "Man goeth unto his work until the evening" might well have been emblazoned on one of Benozzo's panels as the motto of the whole series. He has depicted activities of all types, from building the tower of Babel to bathing a small child; and work as he paints it is never perfunctory, as it is in so many pictures, but a vigorous attack which would win the approval of any foreman. There

is an enthusiasm and a directness about it which is not always found in Millet, and a simple, obvious efficiency which Brangwyn usually passes over in favor of something more picturesque. As a painter of pure movement Benozzo is occasionally very charming; as a painter of applied movement he is almost invariably pleasing and convincing.

If we carry our search for the control of movement far enough it will lead us out of actual motion entirely and on to a stage in which artists represent, or suggest, only the possibility of motion,—a stage which begins, perhaps, with the perfect poise of Van Dyck's figures, who are quite motionless but ready to glide instantaneously into any action that may be required of them, and ends with Piero della Francesca's representations (Pl. 58) of a tremendous latent power. I sometimes suspect that figures of this sort are better adapted to the medium of paint than figures in active motion, and that motion is, in fact, a slightly garish ornament which, like texture, has been imported into painting but never completely assimilated. Fortunately, however, painters are not limited to those few classes of subjects which are supremely well fitted to be made into a picture but are entirely free to take a chance on second bests or even third bests if it happens to suit their fancy, and movement, though not possessing the highest degree of availability, stands high on the eligibility list. Since it never has been, and probably never will be, a breeding-ground for sentimentality there is little reason for trying to dissuade anyone from enjoying it to the limit of his capacity.

After a day at the zoo one is likely to remember most clearly the supple majesty of the lions, the grace of the gazelles, and, for a somewhat different set of reasons, the absurd amble of the giraffes and the sticky crawl-stroke of the parrakeets. All four of these gaits are distinctive because the unity between their various elements has reached an unusually high pitch. In the case of the lions and gazelles the moving parts of all

work together so harmoniously that one is conscious of looking at a very perfect organism; in the giraffes and the parrakeets this smooth harmony is notoriously lacking but through all their movements there runs an odd rhythm which is to be found nowhere else in living things. In one case we have the individuality of complete organization, in the other the individuality of unique flavor. In painting, Michelangelo's famous Adam in the *Creation of Man* (Pl. 48) is an incomparable example of individuality of the first type. The whole form is filled with a single movement, which sweeps with a tremendous crescendo from the passive, expectant body to the outstretched arm, heavy with the new power it is just receiving. For an example of the second type we may choose almost any figure of Botticelli's or Benozzo's. Botticelli's movement, casual as it often seems, has a sensitive, languorous swiftness which has never been duplicated in any later art. Every line which bears any fragment of it seems to sing like a taut wire in the wind, and the tone which it emits is always clearly Botticellian. The uniqueness of Benozzo may be attributed in part to his own genius but more, I think, to the age in which he painted. It was the early spring of movement, when the wintry rigidity of the Giotteschi had just begun to break up and the full summer of Raphael and Michelangelo was still far away, (a period which has not yet recurred in painting and in all probability never will), and movement, in spite of its awkwardness, had much of the rare, poetic beauty of young, growing things.

We might add Van der Weyden to represent the North, for his fine-strung, sensuous affectations catch one's eye in a room filled with the stolid forms of the Flemish primitives like a sonnet set in a page of prose, and Correggio for the later age: there is no adequate word for the melting feverishness of some of his gestures except Symonds's "Correggiosity," and the finest of them are as rare and beautiful as orchids. There are others who have painted unique and beautiful movement but it will

be more profitable to pass over them and look for a moment at a negative example, in the person of Rubens. Master of many of the aspects of movement-painting, he fell short of greatness in this branch of his art because he was unable to endow his movement with individuality. He never carried the organization of a single figure to the mark set by Michelangelo; he never developed any movement-flavor that is as distinctively his own as Botticelli's or Benozzo's; and he never troubled himself sufficiently to vary his rhythms from one figure to another,—his Samson killing the lion is not different enough, considered merely as a moving being, from his child-angels scattering flowers. And in his whole voluminous work there are not more than two or three gestures that one can remember even over night.

HOW MOVEMENT IS PAINTED

It is not easy to depict movement in a medium in which nothing ever moves. Strictly speaking, it cannot be depicted at all, but only suggested; the painter must force the spectator, by some sort of legerdemain, to see motion where there is none. He must present so many of the conditions of motion that it becomes easier to picture the object in question as moving than to see it at rest.

When an object is shown in mid-air without any visible support our knowledge of gravitation almost forces us to see it as falling, but if we are also shown the table or shelf that it has fallen from the impression of movement becomes still stronger. In other cases it is usually necessary to show the motive power as well, the hand that grips the hammer to drive home a nail or the bow-string (Pl. 73) that has sent the arrow on its course. In any case, the greater the number and variety of motion-suggesting details the harder it becomes to think of the object to which they relate as at rest.

It is a great help when the appearance of the object itself changes as soon as it begins to move. To show a wheel as a blur of light indicates very clearly that the spokes are in rapid motion, and to show the leaves of a poplar all silvery means that they are being ruffled by the wind. The movement of water is an especially satisfactory thing to paint because it expresses itself so fully in waves, ripples, currents, and eddies. One cannot look at the swirling water in Thaulow's mill-streams, or at Böcklin's massive wave-forms, or even at Ruisdael's gently gliding rivers without feeling instantaneously that they are moving. And the movement of water, whatever we may say of other movement, is peculiarly adapted to become the subject of a painting because, when the form which represents this motion has once been set up the motion continues within it perpetually with very little change. It has all the paintable qualities of immobility plus the dramatic and imaginative interest of movement. It is as fascinating as those amazing pages in *Sand* in which Algernon Blackwood describes the return to earth of one of the ancient gods of Egypt and his reincarnation in a body which he shapes for himself from the sand of the desert—without moving a single grain of it.

When the painter of movement turns to living things for his subjects he finds forms which express their own movement still more completely and more strikingly, but he is still frequently obliged to appeal to our knowledge of the elementary mechanical forces just as he did in painting the movements of inanimate objects. It is gravitation, for instance, that gives to the terrible human cataract in *The Fall of the Damned* (Pl. 10) its swift downward impetus; it is gravitation that pulls gently on the lifted feet of the *amorini* in Albani's *Dance* (Pl. 66) and keeps them swinging in their endless round; gravitation is the chief motive power in the forward plunge of the breathless nymph at the right of Botticelli's *Spring* (Pl. 23), and in the

long downward swoop which the angel of Tintoretto's *Annunciation* (Pl. 69) is just bringing to an end. Our familiarity with the operation of levers comes into play everywhere, for what are the bones of the arms, legs, trunk, hands, and feet but a great system of levers by means of which the human, or the animal, machine executes its motions? Their importance in the whole process may be judged from the amount of movement which may be suggested by the aid of bones alone (Pls. 12, 13), or merely by the straight lines which represent them in a child's drawing of running men. The position of the limbs fixes the key of the whole representation of a moving figure. If the legs of a figure, for instance, are widely separated we are strongly predisposed to see it as walking, while if they are more or less bent we are equally disposed to see it as running.

The first principle which governs the choice of such positions is that they should be highly characteristic of the movement to be represented, and, if possible, positions which do not occur in the course of any other movement or in any state of rest. But this must usually be modified by another principle, based on the fact that the representation of movement is essentially a problem in suggestion rather than in direct portrayal: it is better to choose positions either at the beginning or toward the end of a movement because they are so strikingly incomplete that they inevitably carry one's thought forward through the next phase of the action and thus greatly strengthen the impression of movement. They are like instalments in a serial. In Plate 66 a majority of the gestures are just beginning, while in Plate 13 the greater number are just approaching completion. End-positions, or intermediate nodes at which the moving limbs pause for an instant, have the great advantage of being more familiar to our eyes because we have time to study them and fix them in memory; many of the intervening positions are passed through so rapidly that they are practically invisible. When Muybridge published the first instantaneous

photographs of moving animals about forty years ago the postures which they revealed were so fantastic, and often so extremely awkward, that people were unwilling to believe that the camera had told the truth. Artists who had spent their lives in drawing animals were as much surprised as anyone. But a few adventurous painters began to use this new knowledge, and many of these still invisible positions have become so familiar to the public, at second hand, that people accept them almost as readily as if they had seen them with their own eyes. Modern artists, therefore are no longer restricted to the visible end-positions but are free to use any others in the series which may seem to have a higher power of suggestibility.

It seems hardly necessary to point out that in a painting the movement-value of any position varies greatly according to the point of view from which it is seen. The positions most characteristic of walking show up best from the side and the same is true of running, though this makes a passable picture from the front, but walking a tight-rope, in which the balancing with the arms is the most distinctive element, can be shown best from front or back, and many of the more complex movements, such as those in Plate 66, call for a three-quarters view. Swimming is best seen from directly overhead, but most other movements, such as walking and running, are absurd and almost meaningless when one looks directly down on them from an altitude.

The belief is widespread that the chief secret of the representation of movement is to be sought in the drawing of the muscles, but a brief comparison of the movement in the skeletons of Plates 12 and 13 and the fully clothed figures of Plates 16, 40, and 41 with the movement of the most agile nudes that can be found ought to be enough to dispel this myth. There probably is a considerable advantage on the side of the nudes, but in comparison with the total movement the increment contributed by the muscles seems small. There

are few nudes which surpass Botticelli's *Judith* in beauty and clarity of movement. For a variety of reasons the part which the muscles play in painted movement is much less than the part they play in actual movement. In the first place, most of us have so few opportunities to study well-developed bodies engaged in a great variety of movements that we are not competent to interpret the spectacle when it is presented to us. Very few persons could even tell from a careful drawing of a fore-arm what the position of the fingers must be, yet every change in the position of the hand is recorded there and the fore-arm is one of the most familiar parts of the human anatomy. But there, and still more in other parts of the body, many of the most important muscles lie so far beneath the surface that their contraction makes comparatively little change in the visible contours above them. And even when the movements of a muscle can be plainly seen, in a majority of cases only a person with highly specialized anatomical knowledge can describe precisely the movements of limbs or trunk to which it corresponds. Many movements can be executed without any striking change in the appearance of the muscles, and in others the muscles chiefly concerned are hidden from the observer by the rest of the body, or by the moving limb itself.

The true function of the muscles in the representation of movement is, first, to supply the energy which is needed to carry on the movement, and second, to suggest, by their smooth, harmonious lines, that it is being executed fluently and gracefully. They reveal little about the nature or object of the movement, but they make it more plausible, more beautiful, and more impressive. Rubens's movement probably owes much of its effectiveness to the immense muscular vigor from which it wells forth.

Yet although the muscles cannot in themselves create or even describe movement they can very easily destroy it. If the

painter puts them in his picture at all he must make them anatomically correct and dynamically expressive. We may not know enough about their operation to interpret their various patterns clearly in terms of motion, but when they are improperly drawn some vague, deep-lying memory is likely to rise and warn us of the fact, with sufficient firmness to keep us from yielding completely to the illusion of movement; and when they are too flabby, as in so many of Raphael's figures, they merely undermine the movements they ought to support. And when the painter goes to the other extreme and makes them too knotty, as Perino del Vaga did in his *Archers* (Pl. 73) and Signorelli in so many of his nudes (Pls. 11, 13), they interrupt the smooth flow of the movement as seriously as if they were so many cramps.

The joints are, on the whole, more important than the muscles. In actual movement they are indispensable as connections between the bony levers of the body; in painted movement they have two special functions which grow directly out of this fundamental one. On one hand they provide smooth, vigorous transitions between one moving part and the next, linking them all together in a single easy movement as they could not be linked without some definite, well-marked connection of this sort; and on the other hand, they perform the almost opposite function of setting up nodal points between the various parts of a movement, which separate them clearly from each other and supply the organic distinction which most vertebrates possess and most invertebrates lack. The dangers which the painter runs when he slurs over these articulations may be studied in many of Titian's figures. Correggio's joints, though they often seem at first glance to be no more clearly marked than Titian's, will be found on closer examination to be carefully indicated, and with such great knowledge that, even though they are only sketched in with faint shadows, they are wonderfully effective. They more than atone for

the Raphaelesque, movement-destroying chubbiness of his muscles.

The most surprising fact that one discovers in studying the representation of movement is the importance of the head. Although its own movements are comparatively limited it is the commander-in-chief of all the other members, ordering, directing, and energizing them. The muscles supply potential energy to a moving form, but the purpose which initiates the movement and the will which sets it going reside in the brain, and—what concerns us most here—must be read mainly from the face. The expression of the features explains the position of the body, makes it wholly plausible, and, when particularly eager or vivacious, forces one to think of the body below as moving, however static its actual position may seem. Cover the heads in Pollajuolo's *Battle of the Nudes* and see how little of the life-enhancing quality of which Mr. Berenson writes so eloquently resides in the muscles alone, or cover the heads of the skeletons in Plate 13 and note how quickly their vitality fades out. And then cover the bodies and see how much movement is expressed in the heads alone! A large part of the movement in Correggio flows from the faces,—restless, bubbling springs of volatile impulse. Tiepolo's are less vivacious, but he knew how to fill them, to the exclusion of everything else, with a sensuous delight in motion for its own sake, and I believe it is this, more than anything else, which makes his movement so strangely exhilarating. Raphael's people, on the contrary, are occupied with other things than movement; their faces are for the most part grave or meditative or placid. If their movements seem affected or rhetorical it is because their minds are elsewhere; when he gave his full attention to the subject of movement, as in the flying figure with the scourge in *The Expulsion of Heliodorus,* he proved himself the equal of its greatest masters. In Rubens this divorce between expression and posture is still more

marked. His movement is most satisfactory in figures which have a minimum of emotional or dramatic significance. He could cover a body with a sheath of muscle so plastic and so closely knit that movement seems to sweep through it like a wave, but he was no psychologist, and when he tried to give a definite expression to a face it often contradicted the expression (if I may use the term) of the limbs and muscles, breaking down the fine unity of the movement instead of carrying it to completion. Botticelli was far less a master of the human body than Rubens, but because he thoroughly understood the people he created and could therefore keep every part of their bodies in relation to every other he was, I think, even greater as a master of movement. The movement which interests us most is, as I hinted in the first part of this chapter, the movement which is the best expression of life.

This indispensable principle of harmonious coöperation between a considerable variety of elements may be extended beyond the limits of a single figure. In the simplest case, all the figures in a group are set to repeating a single movement, as in the procession in Tintoretto's *St. Ursula* (Pl. 65). Even here the movement of each is considerably intensified by the repetition, but when the artist can break up a movement in any way into separate phases and assign each phase to a separate figure their coöperation is much more powerful. Even a simple mechanical division, such as Tintoretto's device, in the *Annunciation* (Pl. 69), of sending the archangel under the lintel of the ruined door and his train of followers over it, has a distinct value; a more analytical treatment, such as Albani's plan (Pl. 66) of working out all the expressive postures which might occur in the course of a given dance and then giving one to each of his *amorini,* will produce a very vivid impression of motion. It does not differ in principle from the use of successive images in the movies to

give an illusion of motion, although it operates more slowly and does not create as powerful an illusion.

Accessories are quite as useful in indicating the movement of living things as they are in the case of inanimate objects. In *The Fighting Téméraire* Turner used the wake of the tug and in *Rain, Steam, and Speed* the rabbit fleeing before the locomotive to indicate the movement of objects which could not express this movement by any changes in their own forms, and in *Atalanta and Hippomenes* (Pl. 71) Guido relied no less on the draperies that swirl about his figures; there is quite as much movement in these filmy cloths as in the human limbs beneath them. In Albani's *Dance,* again, the tree is obviously a temptation to such a group to form a ring and dance around it; and, to return to human accessories, the musicians perched in it quicken the steps of the dancers appreciably. In Tintoretto's *Annunciation* the hands of the astonished Virgin accelerate the speed of her celestial visitor, partly because their position is so clearly an expression of surprise at the suddenness of his advent and partly because their movement is practically a continuation of his. The door through which he sails is also useful because an open door always prepares one's mind to some extent for motion through it.

There are various other devices for intensifying painted movement but it will be easier to explain them a few chapters further on than at this stage in the discussion.

CHAPTER VII

LIFE

THE MOST PAINTABLE EMOTIONS

Movement, charming as it is, is only the lowest term in the endless series of acts in which life expresses itself. It is constantly expanding into one or another of the higher terms and carrying our attention with it. And among these higher terms the one most closely related to it is emotion.

So much has been spoken and written about emotion in art that one anticipates no difficulty in finding an abundance of pictures in which to study its special functions in painting, but when one actually begins to look for them they prove to be surprisingly scarce. I believe that if all the painted faces in the great galleries of Europe and America could be run through a psychological meter designed to analyze and measure expression it would be found that emotion made up less than a tenth of the total, and that a clear majority of the faces measured contained no emotion whatsoever but only such neutral ingredients as attention, interest, and determination. A very few painted figures are fairly aflame with emotion, a few more are tinged with it, but the rest go through life as impassive observers.

The soil is less favorable to emotion in painting than in most of the other arts, and those emotions which do flourish in it are of the quieter, less dominant sort. Consider for a moment the differences between painting and the theater in this respect. A theater is a room packed with people, all of whom are watching the same thing and being moved by it at the same moment. When one weeps a hundred weep, and when

one laughs he is joined by a thousand others; strong emotions sweep over the house like tidal waves, and no one is ashamed of either laughter or tears. The conditions favor those primitive, volcanic emotions to which every member of an audience is susceptible and which await only a suitable stimulus and some abatement of the normal censorship to seize control of him; in fact, any play which does not unchain a few of them is more likely than not to be a failure. An art gallery, on the contrary, is a comparatively empty room, and the few people who are in it will for the most part be looking at different things. There is no chance for waves of emotion. Contagion, the power of sweeping instantaneously across a great audience, loses all the tremendous value it possesses in the theater; in a picture gallery one would rather not be heard laughing loudly, or even be seen weeping quietly to oneself. Contagion gives place to what I might call infectiousness,—the charm which makes an emotion grow more and more interesting, for a solitary observer, from moment to moment; it is present in high degree in the pictures of Botticelli and Benozzo. The greatest power does not belong to the emotions which can stir the largest number of people in the shortest space of time, but to the ones which can develop the most luxuriant growth within the limits of a single consciousness, and continue to grow for the longest time.

In the theater an emotion must please or interest instantaneously or not at all, but in the more leisurely art of painting there is time for incubation. A play must boil, but a picture may be allowed to simmer; the artist is at liberty to ignore time and devote whatever technical resources he can muster to the production of an enticing, lasting flavor. The haste of modern tourists who are trying to see as many pictures as possible in a limited period of time is not one of the fundamental conditions which determine the nature of painting, but merely a temporary aberration; for the moment, the

world cares more for culture than it does for art, but it will not always be so; some day we shall begin again to go to picture galleries for pleasure and not merely to raise our cultural batting average.

Many other factors also tend to discourage the painting of violent emotion. A number of them may be summed up by saying that too many of its aspects are unpaintable, and the few that can be painted are unable to represent it adequately. The distinctive quality of strong emotion is seldom fully expressed in the appearance of the face and body at any single instant; it takes a succession of instants to do it justice. And the shouts, the screams, and the stormy movements which are its most striking elements can hardly be painted at all.

Furthermore, when someone attempts it these grimaces and contortions stare out at one with the ghastly fixity of death, and instead of suggesting hot, violent emotions give one only an illusion-shattering sense of acute discomfort. In real life, sympathy and emotional excitement, and the rapid change of posture and expression, often make them endurable, but here they seem unnatural and horrible. Even so simple a thing as a mouth opened wide to scream can seldom be painted in any way that will give pleasure. I am sure that the very greatest painters would have felt it no less a prostitution of their talents to paint these deforming passions than to paint a sneeze. They are at all events extremely rare in the work of Titian, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Vermeer, Giorgione, and many other masters of the first rank.

Emotions which carry no suggestion of the passage of time are, on the whole, the most satisfactory to paint. Desire, longing, and ecstasy have been favorite subjects with painters since the beginning of the art, because the spectator can immerse himself in them for an indefinite time without being disturbed by the thought that they are about to transform themselves into something different. He can drain them to the

last drop without distraction. The most striking use of this material in recent years has been made by Ferdinand Beltran Masses, who exhibited in New York a few years ago. His subjects are chosen from certain brutal, passionate aspects of life, which most painters are careful to avoid; but his skill in expressing them through these and other timeless emotions makes them not only palatable but alluring. Rossetti's work in the same field is even greater, because it is less melodramatic. His magnificent duets of passionate surrender, such as the *Paolo and Francesca* in the Tate Gallery, are not so sibilant; through every picture by Masses runs a disturbing obligato of serpents and sin: he has selected the worst of Stuck and the worst of Zuloaga and worked it up into an odorous witches' brew of his own. Burne-Jones also chose desire for his perpetual subject and handled it, in spite of his coolness and emotional thinness, more successfully than either Masses or Rossetti. He saw more deeply into the possibilities of the material, and was well aware of his own limitations. If he had attempted to paint the desires of the flesh the weakness of the bodies he created would have made them pale and uninteresting, but he chose instead the desires of the spirit—and the flame-like spirituality of his tenuous forms turned them to fire. Desire and the resignation in which, in such beings, it must inevitably end flicker through his pictures in all their innumerable forms,—wistfulness, dreams, yearnings, conflicts with duties and conflicts with other desires, a saddened triumph of soul over body, renunciation, the hopeless pursuit of unattainable ideals, and despair. No other painter has rung so many changes on a single emotional theme. He has earned a place in that small group of artists who have mastered their chosen subjects so perfectly that one cannot imagine their work being added to or improved.

Comparable to timelessness in paintability is a certain remoteness from the practical world. It is at a minimum in the

work of Rubens and reaches its maximum in Angelico and Burne-Jones. Every emotion that Rubens depicted is either earthly or worldly; his pictures carry us out of the cloistral stillness of the picture gallery into the hot, hard practicality of the world outside; his realism is so vivid and so omnipresent that it constantly interrupts his art. In an Angelico or a Burne-Jones, on the contrary, every emotion carries us on in the direction in which we have already started, away from the materiality of the world and on toward a region of pure consciousness. Some degree of this detachment may be found, in a variety of forms, in the work of most great painters,—notably in Rembrandt, Van Eyck, Terborch, Millet, Bellini, and even the worldly Titian. It is not merely a coincidence that art has turned so often toward idealism; it expresses a sound instinct for self-preservation. Painting, in particular, has so slight a grip on our attention that it must employ every resource to sustain our interest and renounce everything which might retard the development of the æsthetic mood; and when it can induce an idealistic mood it has not only insured itself against minor distractions but has generated an exaltation of spirit which blends perfectly with æsthetic experience and intensifies it.

In general, it may be said that the value of any emotion as a subject for a painting increases with its resemblance to the æsthetic experience itself. It is easier, for example, to lose oneself utterly in a picture when it contains, as a sort of catalyzer to start the reaction, one of those profound contemplatives whom Caravaggio loved to paint (Pl. 6) than when it contains no better inspiration than the boors and roisterers of Teniers. The endless dreams of Perugino's strangely passive race (Pl. 85) serve the same purpose. They are not compelling, like Caravaggio's, but their minds present depths, as serene and bottomless and free from obstructions as the depths of a cloudless sky, into which it is easy for one's thought to

fall. To give oneself up to their influence is more like dreaming over the lines and colors of a beautiful vase than like any ordinary intercourse with human beings.

Sodoma discovered a mood of still greater æsthetic potency. His people are neither passive dreamers like Perugino's nor cold contemplatives like Caravaggio's, but when, rarely, something rouses them from their languor the soul within them rises and floats out toward it like incense. There is no such rapturous self-abandonment anywhere else in painting, and seldom does æsthetic appreciation rise to the same ecstatic height. His finest figures—there are unfortunately hardly more than a dozen of them—are rapt, sensuous mystics who make the best of Angelico's saints seem no more than smug, busy deacons and the passionate, yearning souls of Signorelli's *Resurrection* a group of eager athletes. The discovery of their strange power is one of the most exciting experiences that painting has to offer. But do not expect to receive it from any photograph, half-tone, or copy!

It is for this reason that painters introduce so many artists into their pictures—poets, sculptors, and musicians, as well as other painters—and show them at work, if possible. The sight of someone engaged in creating art seems to act on the spectator very much as seeing someone in a mood approximating that of æsthetic enjoyment does. Giorgione succeeded in combining both of these factors. His people are obviously dreamers, but one feels that, whatever their ostensible occupation, they are essentially artists as well. If Perugino's faces are windows opening on infinite vistas, Giorgione's are gazing-crystals in which one seems to see vision after vision taking form and dissolving. Anyone who can follow where they lead will be brought very close to the creative processes which go on in an artist's mind—and this is no small part of their irresistible fascination for minds sensitive to art. (Pl. 31.)

Some painters rely on an intellectual substitute for this

catalytic action. They hope by making an emotion a problem to be solved to entangle one's interest quite as deeply. The famous smile of the *Mona Lisa* is the most notable example. It is wholly indeterminate: there are many interpretations which explain it equally well but no one which does it well enough to exclude all the others. One plays with one theory, turns to another, returns to the first, only to veer off to a third—it is a perpetual magnet for one's attention. Vermeer, in his *Girl with a Wineglass* (Pl. 79), went a step further and made his smile practically indecipherable; there is no solution which seems adequate. After puzzling over it for a time one is ready to dismiss it as a symptom of insanity, on the part of the painter or of his sitter, or a fiendish jest of the painter's—but it is too maddeningly human to be disposed of so easily; it must be assigned at least the reality of a dream. In so far as such problems merely set one guessing they are of course no more than æsthetic dead wood, or worse; but in so far as they serve to fix one's attention more keenly on a painted figure, and to hold it there over a longer period, they constitute a very valuable piece of æsthetic machinery.

RISKS IN PAINTING EMOTIONS

There are two great dangers against which the painter of emotions must be on guard. Both arise from the fascinating character of the material with which he is dealing.

The first is the danger of lapsing, under the spell of some bewitching emotion, from the creation of art into mere reporting. Emotion is so interesting in its raw state that it does not need to be subjected to any process of æsthetic cookery in order to find consumers; if the painter happens to be lazy he can transfer it to his canvas without modification, as a Dadaist transfers a newspaper clipping or a collar-button, with the assurance that it will be as palatable to a large part of his public as if he had transformed it into art. Indeed, this

uncritical section of the public will even congratulate itself, as it gulps down great lumps of its favorite emotions, that it is enjoying all the refinements of art—but for the more experienced minority this lumpiness will spoil both the texture and the flavor of the work.

The second danger is more a lapse from reality than from art. It is the danger of falling into errors of proportion comparable to those absurdities of perspective so common in amateur photography, which make a man's feet look twice as large as his head. The mind has its natural proportions as well as the body, and, although they are not so obvious to the eye, they are sufficiently well known to a large number of people to make it dangerous to violate them. If a painter in his enthusiasm for some charming emotion allows it to monopolize some figure so completely that it ceases to exist as a personality and becomes only a personified emotion, the result is quite as absurd as the exaggerated feet. Sometimes this magnification of emotion is carried so far that it excludes practically all the other elements of a personality, and this is fully as bad as painting roofs with no houses beneath them, human torsos moving about without legs, or birds flying without wings. Emotions need support as much as more material things. What we really enjoy is not pure emotion but some person feeling an emotion, and when the personality vanishes our pleasure goes with it. Emotion, to be successful in art, must grow out of something larger and more permanent, as a tree grows out of the earth.

Strong emotion, in particular, needs for its support strong bodies and powerful personalities. Franz Stuck (Pl. 62) mounts his stormy heads on bodies as muscular as a boa-constrictor. Michelangelo (Pl. 48) knew very well that for emotions of the sublimity that he wished to paint he needed not only vigorous bodies but souls of heroic dimensions.

Yet the mere presence of powerful bodies and imposing

personalities is not enough to make great emotion credible. If it were, the Carracci might rank among its greatest masters. Something more is needed: an emotion must fit the body and the personality which present it as a hand fits the arm to which it is attached. It is because Signorelli possessed the rare gift of knowing how to adapt each of these elements perfectly to the other two that he was able to create that series of frescos at Orvieto which may be called both the Comédie Humaine and the Divina Commedia of painting. Seeing each emotion not as an independent thing but as a separate wave on the shifting surface of a vast sea of personality, he was not limited, like Guido Reni, to the few emotions for which he had learned recipes, but could evoke, and express perfectly, any that he might need for the full presentation of his story. Steen may have equaled him in variety, but not in power; Böcklin may have touched as many of the extremes of feeling but he did not cover the intervening territory so thoroughly; Botticelli may have surpassed him in tenderness, Burne-Jones in touching the spectator's heartstrings, and Michelangelo in power, but each of them lacked many of the qualities of which he was master. No one could pour into a single work such inexhaustible wealth of emotion. Here (Pl. 11) are devils—blue, green, or purple of body, hairy, four-horned, bat-winged; the face of the most fiendish one is an abyss of leering cruelty; another, somewhat more intelligent, might pass for a Roman emperor of the worst period; while two or three of a higher order are clearly inspired by ideals of stern relentless justice. Some of the souls whom they are torturing are torn with horror and fear and some with pain and remorse; others have lost every remnant of hope and are cold with despair; a few still cry aloud to their God for salvation and mercy. As long as one stands in their presence one believes in hell with the simplicity of a mediæval peasant. In an adjacent panel (Pl. 13) he has depicted the inexpressible joys of the resurrection. We

watch the tender reunions of lovers, the questioning, the wonder, and the adolescent ecstasy of the newly-risen souls, and the grim exultation of skeletons still waiting to be reclothed in flesh. Across the chapel we see the melting bliss with which the redeemed spirits receive their crowns from the hands of the archangels; and in the vaulting above the spiritual radiance of the Glorious Chorus of the Apostles. In the smaller panels devoted to earthly scenes are all degrees of pride, avarice, hate, skepticism, disgust, grief, faith, and love. He is Angelico, Benozzo, Perugino, Matsys, and Brueghel, all in one. Yet when one compares his passions face by face with those of other men it becomes evident that they are actually milder and more restrained; he somehow secured his overpowering effects with a smaller quantity of emotion than other men spend on results not half so convincing. His æsthetic machine was more efficient because its parts fitted together so marvelously well.

Works of art are subject to a variety of æsthetic diseases. Art, like life, is a delicate equilibrium between many elements and is constantly exposed to the danger that one of them may expand out of all proportion to the rest and destroy the balance on which the existence of the whole depends. When this unmanageable element is moral in nature the resulting disease is known as didacticism; when it is sexual, pornography; when the excess is an excess of theory we term the diseased condition extreme modernity, and do not always recognize it as abnormal; and when it is an excess of emotion we describe the work as sentimental.

Guido Reni, who boasted of knowing a hundred ways of painting faces turned up toward heaven, is the pure, classical example of sentimentality in painting. He was sentimental not from any particular love for either emotion or sentimentality but merely as a matter of business. When he could sell sentimental pictures as fast as he could paint them

why should he trouble himself to produce anything better? Greuze, on the other hand, inflated and prettified emotion, and spread as much of it across his picture as the canvas would carry, because he was more than a little in love with emotion himself. Guido's emotion is cold and perfunctory at best; Greuze's *Punished Son* (Pl. 3) looks like a wake carried on by hired mourners who are all in love with their profession. The dead man who lies so quietly in the midst of his frenzied progeny seems almost sublime by comparison,—until one looks more carefully at his face and discovers that it is buttered with an expression of piety too unctuous to be wholly compatible with death. It is a masterpiece of sentimentality.

Sentimentality has one peculiar property: it exists only for those who are able to perceive it. For all others it is absolutely indistinguishable from emotion in its more normal forms. Of course it acts on them more powerfully since there is nothing in the picture but emotion—no cooling, restraining, diluting elements such as character and will. This is what keeps sentimentality so vigorously alive,—among the psychologically short-sighted. But there is nothing in the nature of this unusual stimulation that betrays the secret of its origin. On the contrary, the devotees of a sentimental work are more likely than not to believe that it represents the true and normal way of depicting emotion in art and that less exciting pictures are merely cold and barren.

We may go even further and say that sentimentality does not exist at all, in any absolute sense. It is only an opinion or a judgment about a work, a feeling that it falls short of the observer's standard of completeness and balance,—and that standard will differ for every observer, according to his experience of life and of art. It is true that in any given age a majority of its cultured people would agree as to what pictures were sentimental and what not, but in a different age the dividing line would be run quite differently: the seven-

teenth century had a keener eye for sentimentality than the eighteenth and the twentieth is more sensitive to it than either. But there is always a cool, cynical minority perched high above this general level who despise half the things that even the cultured accept; and to a few all emotion in art is sentimentality. No one boundary, or definition, can be set up as valid for everyone at all times. To fail to recognize any given picture as sentimental means only that one has not yet reached a sufficient mental altitude to detect its hollowness. It is a confession not primarily of a lack of æsthetic appreciation but of a general obtuseness or superficiality of mind.

If sentimentality is a term of reproach it is merely because intelligent, experienced minds tend to despise the crude pictures which give undue pleasure to the less discerning. Yet it is not mere crudeness and simplicity that offends, for one looks with a lenient eye on the pleasures of children and the art of savages, but the fact that most sentimental art is designed to appeal solely to a low order of mind, and offers that mind nothing, neither sustenance nor stimulus, which might help it to develop into something higher. We hate to think that the general public is being buncoed into accepting shoddy goods when there are such excellent ones to be had for the asking; we hate to think that their principal chance of learning to distinguish between the two is being rapidly destroyed; and above all we hate, and even fear, as we hate and fear mobs, insane people, and degenerates, the excited manifestations of a low intelligence which sentimental art invariably arouses. It is a natural instinct of self-protection which cannot easily be restrained. There is often nothing positively bad in a sentimental picture, but its very existence is evidence of the persistence of a state of intelligence which, like other obscenities that have come down to us from a remote past, we should prefer to conceal and, if possible, forget.

Sentimentality will thrive in any emotional soil but there

are a few in which it grows with especial luxuriance. Certain emotions have been elected by the human race to an almost official position in its affections. Everyone cheers automatically when they appear, as if they were so many governors or senators. Mother-love and the tears of a child are, as we may learn in Hollywood, "sure-fire stuff." In an earlier generation piety was equally effective. It is on material like this that the sentimentalist seizes with an infallible instinct.

Sentimentality itself is probably entitled to rank as a distinct emotion, for whatever other emotion the sentimentalist happens to be revelling in his reaction is always the same,—sweetish, insipid, hectic, and mawkish. It is a sort of fever which preys parasitically on other emotions. The sentimentalists among painters love to portray it—Greuze, Dolci, and Murillo—just as finer artists like to introduce dreamers and contemplatives into their pictures: it helps to bring the spectator quickly into the mood to which the whole picture is attuned.

But it is a mistake to assume that sentimentality is limited to emotional subjects. Anything that can be overemphasized, thrown into the limelight, distorted, or slightly falsified in the hope of giving an extra thrill of pleasure to some person too silly to detect the fraud may serve as the basis for a sentimental masterpiece. Children praying in their night-clothes (in broad daylight), children playing in their underclothes (on a public street), and dogs dressed up in doll's clothes have been worked up into excessively saccharine compositions without using a trace of emotion. All that is needed is the true sentimentalist attitude, which corresponds in the artist to that of a mother putting a rather stupid child through its cutest parlor tricks, and in his audience to the circle of admiring relatives. The essence of the performance is a pretense that something or other is vastly more charming and interesting than it really is.

The French painters of the eighteenth century investigated thoroughly the possibilities for sentimentality in the depiction of character. Having for patrons a light, pleasure-loving society, they kept strength, determination, depth of feeling, and idealism at a minimum in all their representations of human beings, lest these too-vigorous qualities should introduce a jarring note, and restricted themselves almost entirely to the fluffier elements in personality, such as volatility and charm. Chardin is the only clear exception, though Watteau, Fragonard, Vigée-le-Brun, Boucher, and even Greuze in his serious portraits managed somehow to retain enough of the cartilage, if not of the bone, of human character to keep their figures from melting into jelly and sliding into the abyss of sentimentality on whose brink they all stand. The others are not human beings at all but only clever personifications of a few of the commoner social lubricants and stimulants. It has been the great fault of fashionable portrait-painters ever since to offer us some agreeable mixture of the lighter social virtues instead of a solid human character. Watteau charms us exceedingly because, in the midst of this artificiality, he presents his abstractions frankly as animated dolls and never pretends for a moment that they are real people.

Greuze, in his studies of young girls (Pl. 32), is not content with sentimentality alone but adds to it an insidious sex-appeal, blending them with such satanic skill—balancing an overripe youth against a too sophisticated innocence and spicing its tempting sensuousness with moral frailty—that the dazzled spectator is unable to realize how meretriciously each separate element is handled.

It is a mistake to suppose that extreme sweetness always indicates sentimentality. Some of Sodoma's women drip more sweetness than the most mawkish of Greuze's yet they are never sentimental. The saving difference is that while Greuze paints sweetness for its own sake, or because he thinks that

someone else will find it sweet, Sodoma paints it only incidentally, as one of the many aspects of the lovely being whom his imagination has created.

The mere absence of any element or group of elements in a personality is also an insufficient test for sentimentality. Velasquez's *Head of Philip IV,* for example, is not sentimental merely because it lacks a body for one assumes as a matter of course in looking at it, if one thinks of the matter at all, that it has a body which, for good and sufficient reasons, was not shown in the picture. But when Murillo sprinkled his rosy clouds with the heads of cherubs and attached a pair of tiny wings to each neck as a substitute for a body he was guilty of the grossest sort of sentimentality. It is the same with emotions: it is not invariably necessary to *show* the substratum of character which supports them; if it can be sufficiently indicated to the spectator's imagination that is enough. But when an emotion is displayed on a sort of dummy which has obviously never possessed a character, or even a personality, and cannot be imagined to have one, merely a lay figure with muscles which serve the elementary purposes of expression, there is no escape from diagnosing it as sentimentality. The sketchier figures of Steen and Brouwer will serve as examples of one type, Carlo Dolci's for the other.

A number of mannerisms in painting which are sometimes mistaken for sentimentality are really too innocuous to deserve the full stigma of that name. The affectation of Crivelli (Pl. 60) and of Van der Weyden escapes the charge by virtue of its frankness. Neither artist tries to pass off his work for anything higher or nobler than it is, but offers it simply as a piece of flamboyant, sophisticated embroidery on some trite theme, —comparable to the variations on "Home, Sweet Home"— for the pleasure of those who happen to care for that sort of thing. The affectations in Botticelli seem to belong more to his sitters than to the painter himself and accordingly give

no cause for censure. The apparent sentimentality of Raphael's *Entombment* should be charged in large measure to the technical shortcomings which still hampered him at that early period. He seems to have been deeply interested in the story and in each of its actors; if the poses and the expressions seem unreal it is in all probability because his youthful ambition led him to attempt more action and more emotion than he had learned to draw convincingly. Rubens was closely related to the sentimentalists yet clearly different from them. He was undoubtedly careless and superficial and had no compunction about attempting emotions which he was unable to feel or to sympathize with, and he seldom took the trouble to set them properly in a frame of personality and character, yet one seldom thinks of accusing him of anything worse than irreverence and indifference. His very superficiality and indifference saved him from falling into the strained, false attitudes of the sentimentalists. His psychology may be painfully inadequate, but at least it preserves the simple honesty of a hurried sketch.

OTHER ASPECTS OF LIFE

Works of art which are by the nature of their medium in constant flow—music, drama—are free to use material of great simplicity and to embody it in sharply defined forms, for the primary problem in æsthetics—how to hold the spectator's attention until he has reached the climax of the work—is taken care of by that constant change and movement which are the very essence of the active arts, and therefore does not need to be provided for in the subject-matter. But the passive arts such as painting must make a great many provisions for holding the spectator's attention when it has once been caught or it will surely escape too soon. Complex, indeterminate subjects are of much more value here than simple definite ones;

they are like passages in a labyrinth from which it is difficult to escape when one has once entered. Puzzling emotions are better than obvious ones, and moods, in general, are worth more than emotions. Emotions are fixed and limited actualities while moods hint at a multitude of possibilities, and the laws of attention give the latter type of subject a great advantage in all the static arts.

I do not mean to suggest that emotion is at all out of place in painting—Signorelli alone has left enough evidence to disprove that—but only that it carries a slight handicap. Botticelli, painting not single emotions but two or more contending for the mastery of a face or body, seems more painter-like than the simpler Signorelli; and Giorgione, painting pure moods on whose still surfaces any emotion would seem as disturbing as a flaw in a mirror, more so than Botticelli.

A trait of character serves the same æsthetic purpose as a mood and that complex of traits which makes up a portrait is better still. Formal portraiture is so complex a subject that it must be given a chapter of its own; we can consider here only a few of the other varieties of character-painting which occupy the vast region between full portraiture and the painting of emotions and moods.

A majority of the painters who are particularly famous for their depiction of human life have gained this fame by the creation of a strongly marked type. The inhabitants of Perugino's pictures are all blood-relatives; there are more resemblances than differences between them. If one of them should stray into a picture by Titian or Goya he could be identified instantly and returned to his proper place. The differences between these various painter-races are greater than those that have sprung up between European men, taken as groups, in the natural course of evolution. The tribe of Burne-Jones differs more from the tribe of Piero della Francesca than Italians do from Swedes. And the tribes of Francia,

Angelico, Lippo Lippi, Mantegna, Rubens, Watteau, and Puvis de Chavannes are no less distinctive in character.

Rubens almost escapes from this class. He is the only member of it who distinguished the two sexes at all sharply; and the turbulence of his compositions creates an illusion of a clash between vigorous wills; but he went no further: he never created a wholly autonomous figure. The best of them almost attained their independence, but a string or two always remains to betray the fact that they are still in their puppethood. One is always aware that they are being manipulated by someone behind the scenes.

Filippino Lippi does escape. In spite of his very close relationship to his father, Fra Lippo, and to his master, Botticelli, he painted strongly individualized figures where they, for the most part, painted only a type. He too, of course, had a type on which he could fall back for secondary or idealized figures —his madonnas are the purest examples of it—but, with all his lightness and frivolity, he was as interested as a cartoonist in the physical differentia which are the outward signs of individuality and he has left us a large gallery of striking personalities. Botticelli, with his great talent for portraiture, could have done the same if he had chosen to but his interest lay elsewhere.

Filippino gave the externals of individuality, Leonardo its inner essence. Superficially, his faces are as much alike as Perugino's, but behind these conventional features reside souls of such unfathomable depth that one admits them without question to the rank of individuality. One generalizes about Perugino's people as a race but seldom thinks of considering them as individuals; each of Leonardo's, however, is so powerful and so fascinating that one forgets that he belongs to a race at all.

But for painters who can without exaggeration be ranked with novelists as creators of characters we must turn from

Italy to the North. Filippino Lippi at best gives only a cold, rather abstract record of a personality, but the figures of Jordaens (Pl. 64) have the warmth and turbulence of life itself, and that indefinable inner spark which is the very breath of life to a painted figure. They are not chiefly interesting, like those of Rubens, for what they do but for what they are. They are not mere frameworks on which to hang emotions and gestures but full-length, well-balanced studies in personality. Any one of them, if cut from its canvas and framed alone, would pass for a successful, though rather unconventional portrait.

Brouwer (Pl. 81) was a shrewder observer of human character than Jordaens, but his insatiable love of humor usually carried him out of the bounds of portraiture into caricature. As with all people who are made ridiculous in art, one tends to regard his figures not as individuals but as types of various vices and absurdities; but in reality he ranks extremely high as a creator of vivid and unique personalities. Steen was also a humorist, but he dealt in comedy rather than in farce and seldom allowed laughter to go far enough to destroy the individual dignity of his sitters. They seem the most normal people in paint; he had no ulterior purpose in painting them, and there was no squint in his vision; the humorous light which plays so gently over their faults and foibles only intensifies their common humanity. And what an extraordinary range of types he could understand and sympathize with!

Steen, like Brouwer and Jordaens, was essentially an observer, setting down life very much as he found it. Ford Madox Brown (Pl. 5) was a creator of characters. He seems to have worked from models, like other painters, but the figures he evolved from them were not mere portrait-sketches. He delved into the personalities of every story he had to illustrate as deeply as he did into the archæology of the period in which it was laid; he enriched them from the

inexhaustible curio-shop of his imagination and devised startling and expressive stage-business for them. Above all, he seems to have worked himself into a state of extreme sympathy for each of them, and as a result every one who studies his pictures carefully falls into the same mood. He was a congenital and incurable democrat; his young pages are as human, as appealing, as rich in history and in hopes as his poets and his kings. Brouwer was careful not to insert more than one full-length portrait in a picture, but Brown painted as many as he had characters. This unnatural and unæsthetic equality plays havoc with his dramatic composition but it has its emotional and intellectual compensations. It is perhaps an exaggeration to call him the Walt Whitman of paint and canvas, but he was at least the first great democrat to express himself adequately in this medium. Two phrases from his own description of his masterpiece, *Work,* reveal the spirit of the man as clearly as printed words can: "though at first they may appear just such a group of ragged dirty brats as anywhere get in the way and make a noise, yet, being attentively considered, they, like insects, molluscs, miniature plants, &c, develop qualities to form a most interesting study," and "deeply penetrated as he is with the axiom that each unit of humanity feels as much as all the rest combined." True portraiture is not merely a form of art; it is an attitude of mind.

CHAPTER VIII

PORTRAITURE

INDIVIDUALITY

A portrait, in the fullest sense of the word, is a study not merely of an individual but of his individuality,—of all the qualities, that is to say, which justify us in speaking of him as an individual.

This means to many people only the qualities which render him unique among all the members of the human race, and they judge the merits of a portrait solely by this standard. If the artist has made it difficult to imagine that there was ever more than one man who looked exactly like that it is considered an excellent portrait; if it might conceivably serve equally well for any one of a hundred or a thousand men it is considered not so good.

There has always been a school of portraiture to correspond to this school of criticism, but its originator, Jan van Eyck (Pl. 35) is still its greatest master. Dürer and Holbein (Pl. 28) are sometimes said to rival him as precise recorders of the details of a human face, but examine their pictures closely and you will discover that with them precision does not extend beyond the lines of hair and beard and a few of the more important contours, and that the intervening spaces are handled as broadly and as conventionally as in a Raphael or a Romney. Certain moderns who have learned to copy nature with mirror-like fidelity might be brought forward as candidates for the honor, but here, too, it will be found that their fidelity is somewhat of an illusion: they are faithful only to the whole impression and indifferent to all the minor details. Antonio

Moro probably used as much detail as Van Eyck but selected and wrote it down almost at random. The great Fleming was not only a minute and painstaking topographer of the human face, but knew his material so thoroughly that he could arrange every detail systematically in its proper place and make them extremely easy to read and to interpret.

It seems to me that Watts (Pl. 36) did for the soul very much what Van Eyck did for the body. The soul, of course, does not lend itself to such precise map-making, but his faces may at least be compared to great relief-maps of spirit, on which one looks down as if from a mountain-top. In the foreground a great deal of detail can be recognized; in the middle distance as much more is hazily visible; and from there the whole panorama fades off into a misty infinity. More than any other painter he reminds one of the ancient belief that the soul is a vapor,—yet the portrait as a whole seems surprisingly complete and realistic. This is perhaps because he has been obliged to use almost as much physical detail as Van Eyck and has set it down in ordered fashion,—but where Van Eyck's flesh is opaque his is diaphanous, to permit the soul within to shine through.

But the word individuality has a second meaning. It refers not merely to the various marks which serve to distinguish one individual from all other individuals but also to those inner coherences between his parts which alone enable them to function together as a unit and make it possible to speak of him as an individual at all. Individuality of this second sort is organic and vital; it is the very core of a man's existence, the one thing that makes him an object of interest to other men and a force to be reckoned with in the world; but individuality of the first sort is superficial and accidental, depending on chance differences between one man and another. Individuality of the second sort would remain the same if its possessor were the only man living, while the first sort would

cease to exist. Most of the great portrait-painters have been at least as much interested in this basic individuality as in the other, and some of them much more so.

There are four publics for every portrait: the sitter himself, his friends and acquaintances, those who know him only from books or legends, and those who have never so much as heard of him. Among these four groups none but the second will ever demand an exact and detailed representation of the man's appearance. The third group will have some interest in knowing how he actually looked but will be better satisfied with some idealized representation that makes all the interesting stories about him plausible; and the sitter himself can nearly always be counted on to prefer being shown to the world as a noble and interesting organism to being exhibited as the particular ornery specimen of *homo sapiens* which he happens to be. The fourth group, of course, will invariably be more impressed by a portrait which depicts a powerful personality than by one which is merely an exact but prosaic record of a face; and as this group is always in the majority and increases in size and authority with every passing year it inevitably becomes the court of last resort for deciding all questions as to the merits or demerits of a portrait. Its whims and preferences set the standard by which the rank of any given picture will ultimately be determined.

It might be thought that a sufficiently skilful painter could bring both types of individuality to a maximum in a single picture but all the evidence goes to show that this is impossible. As you increase the amount of detail in a face, beyond a certain necessary minimum, its vitality is slowly obscured and its dynamic energy diminishes. This is one reason why a photographic portrait, if it is of the sharply focused sort, is usually a tame, static affair. (Another is that the camera can neither select nor emphasize; it cannot deal in human values as such but only in visual values.) Van Eyck, and to a lesser

extent Watts, was too willing to sacrifice the mystery, the radiance, and the pulsating vitality of life to a sort of rogue's gallery ideal of exact identification. Before a portrait by Van Eyck one thinks, "He must have looked exactly like that"; before a Watts, "So that is the sort of man he was?" but before a Velasquez (Pl. 27), "There was a man!" Velasquez used very few of the details of character in building up his figures—he was as discreet as a physician in his professional relationship with his sitters, betraying nothing of what he saw in their personalities except what any layman could read there for himself—but what few he did use he laid so close and cemented so firmly together that his people seem as strong and self-sufficient as walled cities.

Leonardo, somewhat paradoxically, discarded detail to gain completeness,—not, of course, the museum-like completeness of Watts and Van Eyck but the smooth, flawless, unassailable completeness of a circle, the completeness of a man who has mastered both himself and the world around him. The *Mona Lisa* is so compact, so finely polished, and so inscrutable in her perfection that portraits which in any other company would be called excellent seem, beside her, as crude as if they had been hewn out of stone on Easter Island. Even the masterpieces of Dürer, Goya, and Bronzino are seen, in her radiance, to be full of distortions and psychological holes. Yet what, precisely, does Leonardo tell us about La Gioconda aside from her amazing completeness?

Although neither La Tour, Raeburn, Ingres (Pl. 34), nor Augustus John (Pl. 37) has carried the disregard of detail as far as Leonardo and Velasquez they are never afraid to sacrifice it ruthlessly whenever such a sacrifice is needed to keep their figures properly dynamic. Those of John and Ingres, in particular, come at one with a tremendous rush, and one's memory bears the mark of the impact for years. (And this memory-test, by the way, is not at all bad as a rule-of-thumb

method of separating the first-rate portraits from the mediocre ones.)

IDEALIZATION

If a painter is to present his sitter to the world as an individual, in the fullest sense of the word, he cannot accept the casual valuation which society at large has placed on him, for that represents merely his value as a minor cog in the great human machine, but must clothe him in his absolute value as a human being, which may be considered, for all practical purposes, as infinite. And to achieve that end he must take him very seriously, more seriously perhaps than anyone but a portrait-painter ever takes another person unless he happens to be in love, more seriously, indeed, than most people ever take themselves. The function of the portrait-painter in art is like that of the microscope in science: he detaches an individual as completely as possible from the rest of the world and then magnifies him to more than life size. This process is sometimes described as flattery and sometimes as idealization but it is in reality only the highest form of realism. It is a response not so much to the pride of the men and the vanity of the women who come to be painted as to the central ideal of portraiture itself,—the carrying of individuality to the highest possible pitch. (It should be noted that this ideal demands, incidentally, that the painter's own personality should be kept well in the background—the self-restraint which the impetuous Tintoretto practiced in this branch of his art should serve as an example to all makers of portraits—and that any exuberant display of virtuosity or parading of a new technique should be avoided.)

The prettification employed by Romney, Nattier, and hundreds of their successors is not covered by this defense of idealization, but it hardly needs any apology. It is as trifling

a matter as the choice of a pleasant expression or a becoming costume—one of those pleasantly turned compliments which everyone expects but no one believes—and unless it is carried so far that it actually interferes with the presentation of character it can do little harm. Reynolds's trick of endowing his sitters with more personal charm than they actually possessed and Van Dyck's habit of clothing everyone in an aristocratic *savoir faire* (Pl. 30) are more questionable, for they verge on outright falsification of character, but Holbein's dignity (Pl. 28) is an excellent example of the sort of idealization of which I have been speaking. It is not so much an addition to or modification of the sitter's own personality as a means of calling attention to its actual virtues and its innate worth; it is merely an evocation of the dignity which is latent in the meanest of human beings. Gilbert Stuart employed dignity for somewhat the same purpose, but it is dignity of a more external sort, the dignity which men assume in their capacity as public officials and women in their capacity as leaders of society. It was probably the sphinx-like, semi-official immobility of Washington's face which exercised that extraordinary fascination over him of which so much has been written. Velasquez's dignity contains a much higher percentage of ego than either Stuart's or Holbein's, and seems a more integral part of the sitter's own personality (Pl. 27)—a sort of wall which he has erected to protect his secrets, his weaknesses, and his privacies from the inroads of the world—but it serves fully as well to accentuate his individuality, and instead of slightly chilling the spectator, like Stuart's and Holbein's, it warms and attracts him.

But if a painter is finely sensitive to human nature he will not need to resort to these artificial aids, for what he sees in the personality of his sitter will alone be enough, if he can transfer it to canvas, to give his portrait the necessary flavor of individuality. The trouble is that the sensitiveness of many

painters is too limited in range. Romney, for instance, was a charming painter of femininity—his favorite blend of passivity and volatility, in varying proportions, seemed to serve equally well for all women, and perhaps came nearer to the essentially feminine flavor than anyone had before him—but he had no flair for individuality, and never produced a portrait which even approaches the first rank. Compare him with a connoisseur in individuality like La Tour, who could paint equally well the gentle radiance of a kindly scholar, the pungency of a wit or cynic, the charm of a woman's smile, or any of the racy, worldly flavors that might arise in the pleasure-loving aristocracy of his age, and who managed to find in every new face something that he had never recorded in any other and to distil its quintuple essence into his portrait! The galleries which he fills at St. Quentin and at Paris are the very spice-shelf of portraiture: his portraits are to most other specimens of the art what cloves, ginger, nutmeg, and paprika are to flour, sugar, and butter.

It is because Rubens had no trace of this sensitiveness that his portraits so seldom rise above mediocrity. Here, as well as in his story-pictures, he portrayed a great variety of types but very rarely a true individual. Reynolds suffered from a similar insensibility, though in his case it was less complete. Both were saved from total failure as makers of portraits by the richness of their other resources.

The best examples of idealization through sensitive, and even reverent, study of the sitter's personality are to be found in the work of Watts (Pl. 36). He tried not only to include as many sectors as possible of a personality but to show each of them in the most favorable light. And he seemed to see, with a wonderfully penetrating and sympathetic eye, not only what the man actually was but what he might have become in a happier or more favorable world, and to put some hint of

this into his portrait. Each of his pictures is in some measure an apotheosis of the sitter, and a group of them almost constitutes a mythology. How the few which hang in the National Portrait Gallery stand out from the complacent Victorians around them! These others, one feels, are first of all Englishmen, then citizens, and only as a sort of afterthought men; while Watt's are first of all demigods, then men idealized, and not citizens or Englishmen at all. If his canvases should be lost for a thousand years their thirtieth century discoverer would probably describe them as *The Prophet Ezekiel, The Archangel Michael, The Lord Appearing to Moses,* and the like. The *Swinburne* might possibly be mistaken for someone as worldly as the author of the Song of Songs, and the *Dean Milman* for the devil, but only the *Matthew Arnold* could be identified unquestionably as a Mid-Victorian.

EXPRESSIVE ACTION

According to the ideal theory of portraiture the mere existence of a given individual is a sufficient subject for a picture; and it is by their approximation to this ideal that true portraits can be distinguished from the character studies of Steen, Brouwer, and Ford Madox Brown, in which our interest is divided between what a man is and what he is doing. Yet in actual practice most portrait-painters find it a great help to show their sitters engaged in some slight but highly expressive action. It catches the spectator's attention more easily than a display of pure existence, it makes the sitter look more natural and more human, and it provides a keynote for the whole composition, which is as indispensable in painting as in music.

Reynolds had a special genius for finding simple but expressive actions for his sitters. Much of his movement is in-

formal, and even unconventional, but the whole spirit of the man is revealed in it. His mobile hands are almost as expressive as his faces; they are not mere appendages, like Velasquez's and Van Dyck's, but swift, busy members. Oftener than not they are engaged on some insignificant little task of which the sitter is hardly conscious: it is as if the door of some intimate inner room in his personality, which a more formal painter would have been careful to close, had been left slightly ajar. And others may be opened by the turn of a head, a smile, or the lifting of an eyebrow. But his chief technical achievement in this direction probably lay in setting the whole body in motion, in picture after picture, instead of keeping it rigidly or laxly static.

In most portraits, however, the action is mental rather than physical. Raphael often gave a face a slightly questioning look which serves to bring all the features to a single focus and makes our approach to it much easier. La Tour invariably chose as his keynote a smile. Dürer used an expression of deep and sustained reflection on some knotty problem, while Lotto went so far in this direction that he seems almost to have depicted the actual processes of thought. A step more and he would have been painting genre and not portraits. Rembrandt, in the *School of Anatomy* (Pl. 9), actually crossed this boundary. The figure of the lecturer is beyond criticism—it is one of the finest examples in all painting of the expression of character through action—but the attention with which the listeners hang on his words is so strained that one can neither look at them with comfort nor consider them properly as individuals.

Gainsborough managed to suggest that his vivacious, impulsive, unpredictable beings were just on the verge of doing something, and it seems to serve the purpose quite as well as any actual gesture.

THE SOCIAL MODE

Sometimes the action is not limited to the world behind the frame and we discover that the sitter is gazing or smiling at someone in the real world in front of it. Everything is changed: he is no longer a specimen in a case, to be studied coolly and objectively, but a social being with some of that direct power over us that is possessed by living men. A portrait in the strictly objective mode may tend to reach a higher level of sincerity, and if well done it will inevitably catch some of the charm that radiates from all creatures, from kittens to kings, when they are not aware of being watched; yet it is as social beings that most men are at their best, and as social beings that we are most familiar with them, and consequently it is as social beings that they are most likely to make good portraits.

Most sitters betray in their faces their consciousness of the painter and of his function, and in careful hands this will serve as well as anything else for expressive action. Even Rembrandt, who was so well able to fill the faces of his sitters with other things, found it worth while to let them give a casual, thoughtful glance at him. For Romney's sitters, having a portrait painted was a much more important event, yet they went at it so frankly and naturally and simply that one feels for the moment as if this obvious posing were the only attitude in portraiture that is wholly straightforward and sincere. But when we pass to Sir Thomas Lawrence and see how many of his fine ladies look as if they were wholly absorbed in the task of appearing sweet and bewitching, our taste for this conscious posing suffers a sudden chill.

Portraiture in the social mode is likely to be more successful when this consciousness is so generalized and objectified that we no longer interpret it merely as a consciousness

of the painter but think, "It is me, standing in front of his frame, that he is thinking about." We see the beginnings of it in Raeburn: his people seem immune to the presence of the painter but calmly and coolly aware of the great public that passes before them. In Hals (Pl. 38) it becomes aggressive; one feels as if his people had called out, gaily or peremptorily, as one walked past, and to stop is to come into close personal contact with a rugged, vigorous personality.

Yet this direct action is not indispensable to the social mode. Gainsborough endowed his people so richly with the sort of personal magnetism which attracts all the world to its possessor that one thinks of them, even if they happen to have turned their heads and eyes away, as the most socially gifted people in paint. And Van Dyck (Pl. 30) also painted social possibilities rather than immediate social activity. He conferred on everyone who sat to him a sensitive and well-rounded social consciousness, especially rich in tact and poise, and a high degree of social conscientiousness; his figures are keenly aware of their rank and of their position in society, but no less so of their obligations—that is to say, of their social obligations,—to other persons of all grades and positions. Their readiness with whatever word or gesture may be expected of them is so perfect that one forgets to notice that they are not for the moment proffering either. Terborch achieved the same end by painting every sitter as if he were an intimate friend, and as if he were painting for a circle of other friends rather than for an indifferent public. He never adopted the formal, ostentatious poses which have petrified so many otherwise excellent portraits, but presented his people in the simplest and most natural attitudes; and in revealing their characters he used as far as possible slight, unobtrusive points such as only an intimate friend, or an unusually observant painter, would ever notice, such as the odd curve of

an eyebrow or some distinctive quirk or pressure of the lips.

The greatest of all recorders of social habits and social attributes is John Sargent, but he seldom sets up any social contacts or even creates an atmosphere of friendliness. There are too many items to be catalogued to waste paint on mere goodfellowship. One can look at a Sargent and determine how the sitter treated his servants, what he thought of his friends, whether he was amiable to his family or an unmitigated brute, and guess at his attitude toward clients, rivals, chance acquaintances, and society at large. Race, ancestry, and social position are set down as clearly as in Burke or the Almanach de Gotha. (One wonders whether either Romney, Gainsborough, or Reynolds could have painted a Jew and made him look like a Jew.) But they seldom acknowledge the presence of the casual spectator, and when we come to Sargent straight from Raeburn, Velasquez, Titian, or the other masters of the social mode we miss this simple but efficacious æsthetic lubricant.

THE REFLECTIVE MODE

The painter may, finally, go deeper into the consciousness of the sitter to find a keynote for his portrait. In every vigorous personality some one element takes command early in life and as the years pass reduces all the other elements to subordinate positions subject to its authority. If the painter can discover such a psychological pattern in his sitter and transfer it clearly to canvas his portrait can hardly fail to be a success. In Memlinc's time, if we may judge from his pictures, this dominant element was faith; in Sargent's, some form of egotism. But whatever it may be, it introduces a unity into human character which makes it a very tempting subject for an artist, whose whole professional life is a search for unity in one form or another. Portraiture would undoubtedly

have become one of the leading branches of painting even without the aid of the great variety of motives which ordinarily lead the public to order such pictures. It is, like the creation of a type, of which we spoke in the last chapter, one of those nodes in the great curve of painting at which pictures tend to appear in great numbers.

A portrait, however, whatever other pictures may do, must give some hint of the sitter's self-consciousness, if he has one. No matter how completely it may present him as an active and a social being, if it fails to give us some glimpse of the secluded upper room in his personality to which he retires at intervals to take stock of himself and his affairs it does not deserve the name of portrait; it will always seem as unfinished as a church without a spire. In a child, unconsciousness of self is delightful; but in a man it is set down as a mark of immaturity and in a portrait as a mark of superficiality. Having once tasted in a portrait the stereoscopic pleasure of seeing a man both as others see him and as he sees himself we do not willingly relinquish it.

This inner, self-critical life is what we miss most in the portraits of Sargent and Zorn. It is perhaps more the fault of their sitters than their own, or rather the fault of the age that produced both, but, whatever the cause, their pictures show us only men so habituated to action that they cannot break away from it for even a moment's reflection—some of Sargent's, in particular, seem, when picked out of their social context and isolated from the rest of the world in a frame, as uncomfortable as fish out of water—and when we are in the mood for portraiture, for probing a human personality to its depths, we resent finding the way blocked so early in the path.

The thing I am trying to define is not merely spirituality or idealism, for it is as notably absent from the faces of Memlinc and Van Eyck as from those of Zorn and Sargent, but simply the gift of being able to retire to some remote and half-detached vantage-point and look down coolly on oneself and one's ac-

tions. Velasquez's dignified, deep-rooted pride is perhaps the simplest form of self-consciousness which wholly satisfies our hunger. Rembrandt's wise and mellow old men, Greco's gentle mystics, and Gainsborough's melancholy and somewhat solitary aristocrats come nearer to the full ideal. Gainsborough, indeed, has probably told us more than any other portrait-painter about what his sitters were alike when they were alone. But the great master in the art of viewing people through their own consciousness is Moroni (Pl. 33.) Each of his portraits reveals a man who knows himself fully as well as he knows the world about him—but who is in no danger of losing himself in the morass of extreme self-consciousness—and who by the exercise of this knowledge has been able to find the one niche in the world into which he fits best; and, above all, a man who is well aware that he possesses this knowledge and knows how to apply it. All of his people indulge in self-criticism but only in exact proportion to their needs; they neither shrink into timidity as a result nor effloresce into pomposity and affectation; their minds are always cool and finely poised.

PORTRAIT, NOT MAN

There is, finally, the portrait which never tries to pretend that it is the man himself but offers itself frankly as a portrait, a symbol of all that he is. As our knowledge of any art increases our toleration for all its conventions, symbols, and other artifices increases with it, until in the end we care as much for the technique with which a thing is done as we formerly did for the illusion which this technique created. We begin to appreciate the poet's poet and the painter's painter, and, in the particular field of which we are speaking, the portrait which is not merely a speaking likeness of a man but a brilliant example of the art of portraiture. It is a form of taste which it is easier to attack than to defend—though I believe an excellent

defense could be built up on the ground that it establishes a much closer rapport between artist and layman than the ordinary illusive style of painting—but, in any case, many of the greatest portrait-painters seem to have made a considerable appeal to it in their ordinary practice. Rembrandt in his later years seldom came anywhere near a speaking likeness. He reduced a face to a group of visual elements of almost molecular dimensions by a process of rigorous and profound analysis and then set these elements down on canvas by means of a notation of his own which was more symbolic than imitative. Somewhere in the process those connectives which bind the elements into groups and enable them to function together as mobile units were dissolved out; the durable nuclei which remain are magnificently capable of depicting character but have little capacity for depicting action. No Rembrandt could ever be mistaken, like those splendid illusions of Velasquez's in the Prado, for an actual, living man.

In Raeburn there is even less illusion than in Rembrandt; if one enjoys his portraits it is for their masterly quality as works of art rather than for any charm or magnetism which they transmit. Holbein (Pl. 28) was another analyst, though his reagents were psychological rather than visual. He tore through the soft, mobile surface of a face to the solid, permanent traits which lay beneath, reproducing not the transient mood which happened to dominate a man when he entered the studio but the fundamental complex of qualities which guided his whole life. One feels that most of his portraits would have come out essentially the same if he had happened to paint them twenty years later or twenty years earlier in the sitter's life,—and by way of tangible evidence we have his *Edward VI at the Age of Two,* which is only another version of his father *Henry VIII,* without a beard.

Augustus John (Pl. 37) flies away from reality on the opposite tangent. Holbein's portraits look as if he had just re-

turned from a five-year voyage with his sitter; John's, as if he had had only a five-minute interview—and one feels that if this interview had taken place five minutes earlier or five minutes later the picture would be entirely different, and if the difference in time had been five years it could hardly be recognized as the same man. If he were an analytic painter this would mean failure, but fortunately he is synthetic, pouring into each work a torrent of observation and intuition which raises it high above the level of mediocrity—and gives the best of them an excellent start toward immortality. Yet journalistic as they unquestionably are, and even yellow-journalistic, they are seldom realistic, but dazzling studies in the pyrotechnics of impressionism.

Tintoretto's portraits stop just short of realism because he always executed them in a low psychological relief, allowing the individuality of his sitters to protrude only slightly from the broad background of their race and age. They are the equivalent, in the less tangible realm of personality, of the unfinished statues which Rodin and Michelangelo so often left half-embedded in a block of rough stone. He never allows us to doubt that they have crossed the boundary between typicality and individuality, but having brought them to that point he is not particularly interested in carrying them any further.

Van Eyck and Watts should also be mentioned here for they were always content to *represent* a man instead of trying to reproduce him exactly as he was in life, Watts being willing to neglect body, Van Eyck soul, and both action; and both rank higher by this criterion than by any strictly realistic standard.

Perhaps the greatest difference between a portrait and a living man is that the portrait is under the necessity of going down through countless ages on some public or semi-public wall without ever moving so much as an eyelash; and the sensi-

tive painter will always employ a more or less formal treatment in recognition of this probable longevity. Tintoretto thought it enough to avoid too painfully detailed a realism. Van Dyck imparted to each of his figures a certain indefinable remoteness which lifted them safely out of Time. Holbein's massive dignity and Velasquez's courtly formality served the same end. But here again it is Moroni who understood the requirements better than anyone else. The soul that looks out of each of his faces is unmistakably embarked for immortality; one can trace in them some remote kinship to those timeless deities whom the Egyptians carved out of porphyry and basalt. All their more superficial characteristics are only ripples in this eternal sea. Beside them, even Rembrandt's most profound philosophers, with all their gravity and wisdom, seem a little hurried and transitory.

It must not be forgotten, either, that a portrait is not only a man and a portrait but, first and above all, a painting, subject to all the æsthetic laws which determine the nature of other paintings. At least two artists, Reynolds and Titian (Pl. 29), owe their eminence in this field more to their general ability as painters than to any special gifts for portraiture. Reynolds, of course, never succeeded in any other branch of painting, but his achievements here must be credited to the general virtues of good color, good composition, and endless inventiveness much more than to the few slight talents which were especially adapted to portraiture. As for Titian, he is one of the few painters whose portraiture does not stand clearly apart from the main body of their work. He is hardly aware that he is doing anything particularly different from baptisms and bacchanals, yet his results can serenely face comparison with the finest achievements of narrow specialists such as Holbein and Moroni. There will be more to say of him in a later chapter.

I am afraid that any reader who hoped to learn from this chapter the name of the greatest of all portrait-painters and the five, seven, or nine who belong in the second rank is now feeling disappointed and puzzled. I should be glad to name them for him if I could, but in an art which is expected to satisfy such a variety of incompatible demands this is wholly impossible; no one painter has been able to satisfy all of them, and between the six or eight or ten who have come nearest to this ideal the choice must always be a personal one. If our knowledge of human nature continues to expand at its present pace the art may possibly produce a Shakespeare who will tower clearly above his rivals—and it is inconceivable that the portraiture of the future should not surpass anything that we possess to-day—but for the present it is better to forego the very human pleasure of trying to select one.

CHAPTER IX

ILLUSTRATION

ILLUSTRATION AND GENRE

Two other types of figure-painting stand out sharply from the rest,—genre and illustration. They may be distinguished most easily by defining illustration and then showing how genre differs from it.

An illustration of the most typical sort may be described as a portrait of an imagined event. Each of these three words points to a characteristic difference between illustration and genre.

A true illustration must be a *portrait* because the event which it is supposed to depict is always unique, a thing that has occurred only once, in just this fashion, in history or in literature. If an illustration fails to suggest this uniqueness it hardly deserves the name. Genre is precisely opposite in character: its specific quality is the commonness of its subject; the oftener a scene has been enacted in the history of the world the better genre it will make,—and the vital core of genre lies in the elements which all these repetitions of the scene have in common. It seems hardly necessary to point out that most modern illustrations are really nothing but genre, disguised more or less effectually by a title.

The painter of an illustration may work from models like any other painter, but unless he uses his *imagination* freely to modify their forms and expressions his picture can be called an illustration only by courtesy, for no living forms can exactly express the characters and situations of the story he is trying to depict. It is by the quality of the imagination that pro-

duced it that an illustration will always be judged. But the painter of genre who resorts to imagination to enrich his picture runs a risk of destroying precisely that commonness and familiarity which constitutes the special virtue of genre.

A painter who wishes to illustrate a given story will tend to choose one of its *events* as the subject of his picture, for in an event he can bring together a greater variety of elements from the story than in a scene of any other sort. Genre, on the other hand, tends to find its subject in very simple action.

An event may be defined as a knot in which many threads, sometimes of a single life and sometimes of many lives, are brought together, only to separate again an instant later. In Mantegna's *Madonna with Saints* (Pl. 50) there is no trace of an event, for the lives of the separate figures do not meet; it is only a collection of imaginary portraits. Correggio tried to make his *Madonna with St. George* (Pl. 52) look like an event, but it is only a pious fraud for nothing is really happening in it. Botticelli's *Spring* (Pl. 23) is just over the boundary; it is unquestionably an event, though possibly only an allegorical one. In Brueghel's *Children's Games,* and also in his *Flemish Proverbs,* each separate group of figures depicts an event, rather slight in structure, but there is no connection between one group and another, beyond the fact that they may all be assembled under a single title; the picture, considered as a whole, is, like the Mantegna and the Correggio, not a true illustration, but merely an ethnological collection.

In Signorelli's *Resurrection* (Pl. 13) there are, on the whole, fewer individual relationships between the figures than in the Brueghel pictures, yet they all unite to portray a single tremendous event, very much as the iron-filings which collect about a magnet serve to portray both its power and the lines along which it is exercised. There are, in fact, few more impressive illustrations in all painting.

Structurally, however, Lippi's *Coronation of the Virgin*

(Pl. 17) is more complex, for the two central figures dominate the composition more completely than Signorelli's archangels, and all the others are knit together more closely, so that they form a network of actions and interests. In the Signorelli, any figure in the whole composition could be deleted without greatly injuring its value as an illustration; but in the Lippi the two in the center are absolutely indispensable. In Rembrandt's *Angel Leaving Tobias* (Pl. 68) any one of the six figures—even the dog!—would be a serious loss, for each makes a different, and an important, contribution to the whole; and from Terborch's *The Letter* (Pl. 80), if we may regard that for a moment as an illustration, none at all could be spared. In the Signorelli and the Lippi the numerous figures are like the grains of sand which unite to form a dune; in the Rembrandt they are like blocks of stone piled on top of each other to form a column; but in the Terborch they are put together like the stones of an arch. In Vermeer's *Girl with a Wineglass* (Pl. 79) the figures of the girl and the man who bends over her seem almost welded together, but the man in the corner is so much out of it that he breaks up the unity of the whole.

When an illustration is not based on an event it is liable to lapse, for the general public, into mere genre. The innumerable illustrations on the general theme of *Madonna and Child* which were produced during the early Renaissance are enjoyed to-day by a large majority of people simply as genre studies of a mother holding her baby, with little thought for their religious significance.

REALIZATION

Illustration differs from most representative painting in offering us not a picture of something we have seen already but a picture of something we have only imagined, and that the

painter himself has only imagined. Our pleasure in an illustration comes partly from recognizing the resemblances between what the painter has imagined and what we ourselves have imagined on the same theme, and partly from admiring the great superiority of his imagination, which enables him to realize the scene so much more completely than we can.

If a picture contains only the few essential details which serve to identify it with a given story, plus enough more to give it an agreeable air of verisimilitude, it will, considered solely as an illustration, afford us little pleasure. Pleasure sets in only when the correspondences between the picture and our own visualization of the scene are numerous enough to be astonishing, or when the painter's fidelity to the story or his power of realization seems very great.

Ghirlandajo's *Death of St. Francis* (Pl. 2) is a fair specimen of the ordinary undistinguished type of illustration. We can see clearly that its central figure is dead, we can deduce from the robes worn by himself and the mourners that he was a churchman and from the manifestations of feeling that he was a great one, and if we look carefully we can find the stigmata and identify him definitely as St. Francis. An adequate number of faces are contorted with grief, as many more heads are piously bowed, and one pair of hands is ostentatiously clasped; one good brother even gazes toward heaven in religious ecstasy. It is as entertaining as an old chronicle.

But that is all; he displays no special interest in the story, his imagination does not play over it, except in the most perfunctory fashion, he adds nothing to our previous concept of the scene, and he communicates no thrill. Giotto's interpretation is very different (Pl. 1). After the elaboration in which the ex-jeweler indulged, it looks dry and hard and bare,—but, after all, why should Francis, the great preacher of poverty, die among Corinthian capitals, surrounded by ecclesiastics clothed with rich vestments and equipped with or-

nate paraphernalia? That is the great difference: Giotto goes to the very heart of the story and paints only what he finds there. Take the matter of the stigmata, the most visually expressive bit of detail in the whole Franciscan legend: Ghirlandajo slurs them over as if he were a little afraid of them, but Giotto not only makes them stand out as clearly as eyes but attaches his mourners to them as accents. The man who kneels by the wound in the side thrusts his hand in *up to the knuckles,* where Ghirlandajo's merely plucks daintily at it. Of the two at the hands, one is so placed as to leave the mark clearly visible and the other kisses it passionately; Ghirlandajo's carelessly cover the marks and kiss only the tips of the fingers. Giotto completed his accentual scheme by assigning one man to each foot, but Ghirlandajo decided that a single friar could just as well attend to both. Another important visual symbol in the Franciscan story is the cross. Ghirlandajo introduced two to Giotto's one, but one is cut off from view by the frame of the picture while the other is almost lost in the detail at the back of the altar; Giotto's one stands out sharp and strong against the sky. Giotto chose as the moment to illustrate the most dramatic and most expressive one that the scene afforded, the moment in which the spirit, having just left the body, is being borne to heaven by angels, but the later painter passed this over in favor of something more defunct and funereal and more thoroughly static. Even in the matter of expression, in which we might expect the great master of informal portraiture to excel, Giotto easily takes first place. The face of his dead saint is so strong and peaceful that it would dominate the picture even if it were not reënforced by a halo, while Ghirlandajo shows us only the waxen features of an undistinguished and a very dead corpse. Giotto's mourners are radiant with affection and wonder and faith; Ghirlandajo's are absorbed in grief and the materiality of death—and what excuse is there for encumbering the scene

with the four or five brothers who are so frankly indifferent to it, and with the two or three others whose interest is only casual?

It is important to note that the tremendous effect of the Giotto is produced not so much by inventing new details that Ghirlandajo never thought of as by analyzing the story carefully until its most important elements stand out unmistakably and then accentuating each one strongly. It sounds simple, but the ability to do it with Giotto's thoroughness is extremely rare. He has few, if any, close rivals; and this gift alone has raised him to the small group that takes first rank among illustrators.

Some artists are more interested in reproducing the atmosphere of a scene than in visualizing its details. This seems to have been Abbey's principal object in his Holy Grail series in the Boston Public Library; it was Burne-Jones's in *King Cophetua* (Pl. 49), and Giorgione's in every illustration he painted. The best illustrations of this sort are so elusive and charming that we never tire of them. And here again we find that the painter has not tried to add anything from his own imagination to what was specifically given in the text, but only to reproduce the intangible impressions which he got from reading between the lines. Oftener than not, however, what he really gives us is the atmosphere of his own mind rather than any flavor that is peculiar to the story in hand.

Fortunately, our pleasure in imagination is catholic and responds to all the various forms which it assumes. We are moved by the awe-inspiring simplicity of Giotto, and by the brilliant embroidery of Benozzo. We enjoy blinding flashes of inspiration, like the exultant skeletons in Signorelli's *Resurrection* or the triumphant Christ in Botticelli's *Pietà* (Pl. 8), which illuminate vast reaches of the story, more than it seems possible to express in a single limited form; and we also en-

joy the garrulous but entertaining narratives of Memlinc and Carpaccio (Pl. 59). We like Botticelli's illustrations because his imagination visualizes a tale so completely, and Franz von Stuck's (Pl. 62) because he is so startlingly original.

Atmospheric illustration offers comparatively little opportunity for imagination, in the ordinary intellectualistic meaning of the word, and must be judged by a canon of its own.

TEMPERAMENT

Yet originality is perhaps the last quality we learn to appreciate in illustration. At first we can enjoy only those artists whose minds seem to be very much like our own, only more so—artists who go along with us for the first steps of visualization and then forge slowly ahead. The idealist loves Burne-Jones and detests Rubens; the mystic worships Greco and despises Giotto; while the man of the world gets on fairly well with Giotto and Rubens but hoots at Greco and Burne-Jones.

It was to meet this diversity that the neutral illustration was invented, the illustration which is guaranteed not to offend any eye or temperament but the most exacting, and which may be seen at its worst in almost any current magazine and at its best in the pictures of Raphael and his school. The magazine illustration is designed primarily not to offend anybody; the Raphaelesque picture, to please everybody. The latter acquired in the process at least one great, positive virtue: its highly generalized figures, in which all the corners and rough surfaces which make for individuality have been smoothed out, do fit perfectly the great, legendary rôles for which they are usually cast (Pls. 43, 53). A madonna or a saint by Bouts, Matsys, or Van der Weyden is a little too prosaic, a little too human, for the part. Perugino's, though made by much the same formula as Raphael's, are too narrow,

too empty, and too indolent; Giotto's are too cold, and Boucher's too frivolous. When Titian generalized it was with the eye of a painter rather than with the eye of an illustrator, and the things he eliminated from a face are often just those which contained the special meanings called for by his story. Michelangelo came nearest to the Raphaelesque standard, but he appealed too often to a cold, rarefied type of imagination which is not very common. Raphael's figures are not often either great or stirring but they at least fill acceptably the parts to which they have been assigned.

But in time most of us outgrow our dependence on Raphael and learn to appreciate illustrations by the bolder and more individual artists, however far they may be removed from us in temperament and in habits of vision. We begin, perhaps, by recognizing certain correspondences which are too striking to be overlooked. We may dislike both the heavy-handed grossness of Jordaens and the brutal materialism of imperial Rome, but we cannot help admiring the perfect fitness of one to depict the other, as shown in the *Christ Led to Calvary* at Naples. We may be uncomfortable in the presence of a spirit as unbalanced as Greco's and still be profoundly moved by the appropriateness of the volcanic ecstasy which he poured into his *Resurrection* (Pl. 16).

By such steps we may learn in time to give ourselves up wholly to the guidance of the artist and find our pleasure in exploring eagerly the illustration which he was inspired to paint instead of insisting that he should, if he wishes our approval, merely fill in the outline for an illustration which we have sketched in our own minds. And it is not unlikely, in the present age, that we may even go over completely to the modern cult of originality and begin to value most highly precisely those illustrations which stand farthest from anything we have ever seen or dreamed of before.

IS ILLUSTRATION ART?

During the last half-century or so a tenacious attack has been directed against illustration with the avowed intention of banishing it from painting altogether; and, especially of late years, the "picture with a story" has been obliged to battle for a foothold in the art.

The plaintiffs depose that painters ought to stick to their last, which is form and color, and leave stories to artists who work in words. The principle is sound but the application is too sweeping; one might as well say that writers should, like Gertrude Stein, stick to words and leave stories to painters. Forms and colors combine into objects with meanings as naturally as words combine into sentences; and in that long, almost continuous series which begins with pure form and passes through qualities, meanings, and events up to illustrations, it is impossible to draw a dead line at any given point and declare that beyond that painting must not pass. It may be admitted that as one ascends this scale the difficulty of making a successful painting increases, but that is a very different thing from saying that it ought not to be attempted. It seems to me no more reprehensible, æsthetically, for literature to share the story-telling function with painting than for architecture to share the use of mass and of volume with sculpture. The arts, like other living things, refuse to stay permanently in the pigeonholes into which our logical minds are always trying to cram them.

It is argued also that illustrations can never be anything but a low form of art because they can be understood, and therefore fully appreciated, only by those few members of the human race who happen to be familiar with the stories on which they are based. This is, of course, only a corollary of the Tolstoyan fallacy that the greatest art is that which appeals to the greatest number of people, and it may accordingly be

disregarded in this book, in which we are studying art solely through the medium of the individual æsthetic experience. Problems which cannot be solved without resorting to statistics—if there are any such—we shall be obliged to pass over.

And in any case this particular difficulty can be remedied very easily. A line or two in Baedeker or a hint from a friend can tell all that one needs to know about most pictures in order to enjoy them thoroughly,—although a really first-rate illustration cannot be completely appreciated unless one knows the original text. And who will undertake to explain as easily the difficult mysteries of the pictures which ultra-modernists would substitute for illustrations,—for example, the works of Cézanne, Picasso, Duchamp, and Matisse,—to those who do not happen to possess the special æsthetic knowledge which is needed to understand them?

Extreme purists say that a picture ought not to depend on even a title—not to mention a story!—as an aid to interpretation but should be wholly self-explanatory. It may be admitted that such a picture is sounder in structure, as Norman architecture is, on the average, sounder than Gothic, but it is not always necessary, or even best, to build in that fashion. A title is, after all, only an extremely brief preface to the picture, which, as soon as it is read, dissolves into one's whole concept of the work and may be forgotten. What does it matter, after the first five minutes, whether one's clue to the meaning of the picture came from the attitudes and expressions of its figures or from a few words printed on the frame? In any case, these first minutes are likely to be spent in intellectual exploration rather than in perfect æsthetic enjoyment, and it matters very little what force directs this exploration. And a title is such a useful little device, enabling the painter to handle neatly many subjects which would prove unwieldly material without its aid; it does for painting very much what the introduction of algebraic symbols does for simple arithme-

tic. It is a great help, too, in bringing a picture to a clear, sharp focus.

Sometimes, of course, the title is given too large a rôle, as in *The Baldheaded Man at his Desk* (Fig. A), and refuses to slip back into decent obscurity as soon as its proper function has been performed, and sometimes it is misused with intent to deceive, as in the thousands of pictures which are labelled *Cleopatra, Venus,* or *Psyche* although they contain nothing which justifies any more ambitious title than *Study of Model, Nude,* but that proves nothing except that persons of the class which is said to increase at the rate of one a minute must be on their guard in art as well as in other departments of human affairs. And it is notorious that when an artist fails to provide a title someone always steps forward to supply the lack. It is the same, too, with Terborch's pictures, on a larger scale; few critics have been able to write of them without composing a long story to fit each one. One might describe them as illustrations which had miraculously preceded their texts into the world.

The best way to handle the whole problem is to restate it simply in terms of form and content. It can all be boiled down to a single question, Can form and content (or meaning) be welded into a single work of art, or must they always remain as separate as oil and water?

This question has, however, two applications, one local and one general. To deal with the first we must ask, Can a meaning of the intensity which is required for most illustrations be embedded deep enough in its form so that some mental effort is needed to decipher it, or will it always leap out at one too quickly to afford any æsthetic pleasure? And the answer, I am sure, is that meanings may be thus embedded but commonly are not.

The general application of our fundamental question is more complex. It deals with the problem of uniting meaning and

form throughout the whole picture in a pattern which will give æsthetic pleasure. The general discussion of this problem must be postponed to Chapter XVI, but a few remarks on one of its many aspects may be made here. It is to a certain extent a problem in homogeneity, like determining the beauty of a skyline. In a mountain range, the skyline moves in gentle waves along the horizon and is very beautiful; in a city it is jagged and irregular, shooting up suddenly into twelve- or thirty- or fifty-story buildings and as suddenly down again, and is usually very ugly. A painted landscape is, with respect to meanings, like the mountain range, for none of its meanings rise to great intensity and each one blends easily into its neighbor; but an illustration is more like the city, shooting up here and there into veritable Singer Towers and Woolworth Buildings of meaning which threaten to disrupt the beauty of the whole composition. The passing spectator glances at these skyscrapers and, as soon as they have lost their interest for him, passes on to the next picture without even looking at the low-lying parks and gardens which fill the intervening ground. The latter are so totally wasted that it would be better if the artist had painted two pictures instead of one,—one for the illustration, with little in it but figures, and one for the background. It is to avoid such dangerous concentrations of interest that sculptors so often keep the eyes of a statue blank and expressionless. Many painters, notably Titian, Tintoretto, Greco, Watteau, Wilkie, Burne-Jones, Watts, and Hawthorne, show by their management of figures that they too were well aware of this pitfall; when they have a meaning to express they spread it as broadly as they can over the whole body instead of concentrating it in the face and hands, and also let it overflow, if possible, into the accessories and the background, and in painting the face itself try to reduce the importance of eyes and mouth toward the common level of the other features. Lippo Lippi,

in the *Coronation of the Virgin* (Pl. 17), solved the difficulty, somewhat naïvely, in just the opposite fashion, by making his picture all face. And have they not all done something more than make the best of a bad business? have they not created works which are actually richer, as a mountain range is richer than a rolling prairie, for the meanings that have been worked into their texture? Is it not probable that, as so often happens in art, the original difficulty of the task they have undertaken has only stimulated them to greater achievements?

But even when the meanings refuse to mix with the forms and lie on top of them in a layer of their own, like oil on water, the cause of illustration is still not hopeless, for we can always approach it, not as an undesirable variety of painting, but as an independent minor art whose true medium is not form and color but meanings. Form and color are of course present but occupy as subordinate a position as paper and ink do in the art of poetry. It may be a thinner art than that of pure painting but it is a very intense and powerful one, with at least as much right to existence as other minor arts, such as etching and lithography, enjoy.

In neither case is illustration merely a repetition in paint of things that can be said better in words. It can, by virtue of its power of simultaneous presentation, generate certain fruitful combinations of ideas which cannot easily be suggested in the slower medium of words, and it can tell us many things about a scene which can never be said in words at all. The Bible, to take a single example, is unquestionably a richer book to-day because Raphael and Michelangelo were commissioned to retell its stories on the walls of Rome.

SYMBOLS

When an artist is given an abstract idea to illustrate, as is the custom among the public officials who allot contracts for

decorating libraries, courthouses, money, and other public institutions, his problem is somewhat more difficult. It is not merely the imagining of some scene which is after all not so very different from a hundred others that he has witnessed, but the imagining of something which neither he nor anybody else has ever seen: his task is to invent a suitable form for a thing that never had one and never can have one. It is really more a problem in creation than in imagination.

He may, of course, shirk the job by using one of the many objects which, in the course of history, have become associated with some particular abstract idea—anchors, crosses, peacocks, eagles, and fish—but that is not art, which begins only when he tries to create some original form of his own. Such forms usually turn out to be, for a variety of reasons, some modification of the human form. A painter who knows it profoundly can make it suggest, at least, any abstract concept that is at all closely related to human life, from Peace, Love, or Victory to the greater abstractions such as Night and Death. The best of these human symbols fill one's mind like a perfume—Burne-Jones's *Night,* for instance, is as full of sadness and dusk as a Chopin Nocturne, and the memory of Dürer's *Melencholia* haunts one for life—but the majority stop just short of success, being insufficiently permeated by their idea to rise clearly above the ordinary human level, yet changed so much that we can take little pleasure in them as ordinary human beings; they fall into a sort of æsthetic limbo between the two groups. And the worst examples, such as the figures which Rubens labelled Truth, Peace, and Virtue, are outrageous frauds in which one can take no pleasure at all except by rechristening them Gluttony, Lasciviousness, and Sloth.

Odilon Redon succeeded where many others have failed because he had the artistic courage to reduce the purely human element in his figures to a bare minimum. His mysterious

shapes are so remote, so intangible, and so strangely passive that one accepts them immediately and without question as embodied ideas, and notices only by chance that they are human in form. The struggle which we usually make to sublimate a too solid and too prosaic damsel in flowing robes into Commerce or Justice is unnecessary. His forms are hardly more than incantations in color which waft one imperceptibly into the formless, infinite spaces of the realm of thought.

Yet even this immateriality does not save him altogether from the curse of ineffectiveness which hangs over all symbolism, for its very tenuousness weakens its grip on the attention and diminishes its æsthetic vitality. Watts probably struck nearer than anyone to the happy medium between materiality and immateriality. He never ventured as far toward vagueness as Redon, but on the other hand he could never remain as solid and definite as the ordinary commercial symbolist. When he tried to represent a mere human being, or even something approximately human such as a nymph or a demi-god, he almost invariably overshot the mark. His *Undine,* for instance, is no mere nymph but a great, brooding majestic figure for which every title is inadequate. Even the figures which he calls by such inexhaustible names as Love, Life, and Death seem to overflow the boundaries marked out for them by these words and to expand into symbols of some still vaster entity for which we have as yet no single name. The very greatest of subjects became for him only a theme on which to improvise, and he created new meanings as other artists create new forms.

The figures of Millet, Carrière (Pl. 39), and Brangwyn (Pl. 21) occupy an intermediate zone between symbols and types. Millet painted not individual peasants but an economic class; Carrière, a period of life, a sex, or, occasionally, humanity itself; and Brangwyn, a race, an era in history, or a coherent group, such as a mob or a gang of workmen. They were all

painting Man rather than men, but never carried their generalizations quite to the point of abstractness.

We rank Blake among the symbolists without question but he seems to have looked on himself as a strict realist. He did not have to invent forms that would express Mirth, Morning, or The Soul of a Flea for he had seen them with his own eyes. The power of visualization which is strong in every illustrator was raised in him to the pitch of hallucination. Symbolism was his native tongue, and he spoke it with a power and a fluency that still carry conviction to anyone who listens.

ALLEGORY

Symbolization tends as strongly as ordinary illustration to take on the form of an event, and for much the same reasons. An event in the world of symbolism is termed an allegory. It is an attempt to express in terms of human action the relations between abstract ideas. Proverbs such as "Necessity is the mother of invention" make excellent plots for allegories, though decorators usually adopt more complex ones, as Botticelli did in his *Calumny* and in *Spring*.

Most allegories in paint are so artificial, so strained, and so pedantic that they have no æsthetic value whatsoever, except what they may happen to possess as beautiful arrangements of paint. Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* is a striking exception, a poignantly beautiful statement of the briefness of pure love, swept so soon by the winds of passion toward the placid shores of satiety, to be cloaked from thenceforth in heavy familiarity. Mantegna's *Wisdom Conquering the Vices* also fascinates us, because it sprang from an imagination in which every idea branched and budded like a tree, so that even a world of abstractions became almost as complex as reality. These are not wearisome puzzles but true works of art; where other allegories repel us at every step these lead

us on like fiction until we are sure that we have squeezed the last possible drop of meaning out of them. Albert Ryder, Arthur Davies, and Frederic Ballard Williams show us their figures through some mysterious veil of meaning, but it is so vague and shimmering that it can hardly be distinguished from the veil of mystery which all poetic painters hang before their men and women—and here again allegory becomes an art. But for the most part it ranks a grade or two below parody.

PART II: COMPOSITION

CHAPTER X

THE NATURE OF BEAUTY

MEANINGS, QUALITIES, FORM, AND BEAUTY

We have probably spent more time over the meanings of forms than they are worth æsthetically—in any case, we have gone as far as we can without exploring a little the more innate properties of form which underlie the outer strata of meanings. And I believe that this task will be easier in the end if we plunge at once to the very heart of the matter with a brief inquiry into the nature of beauty.

The dictionaries usually treat beauty as a generic term for everything that is capable of arousing æsthetic pleasure, but I wish to restrict it here to the central core of this experience, in which æsthetic pleasure attains its purest and most characteristic form. In dealing with any science one always encounters certain words which have to be handled like algebraic symbols,—which have to be assigned, as we do with *x*, *y*, and *z*, whatever arbitrary values seem to promise the quickest and simplest solution of the problem in hand, instead of being taken over with whatever indeterminate meanings they may have acquired in the rough-and-tumble of ordinary usage; and it seems to me that in æsthetics the word beauty is the chief of these. Let us proceed, then, to see what elements in our æsthetic experience may be put aside as less essential or less characteristic than others.

The pleasures based on meanings are the easiest to reject because they involve so many references to other objects and so much irrelevant, wholly unæsthetic thinking which inter-

rupts the smooth flow of pleasure. This includes, of course, pleasure in utility and efficiency, of which we hear so much in connection with the industrial arts, and pleasure in resemblance. All these pleasures are based on an alternation between the representation before one's eye and the corresponding memory-image to which one refers it, and this alternation, however useful and even necessary it may be in the practical conduct of the representative arts, is too clumsy and disjointed to deserve the full name of beauty.

We can also eliminate at once our pleasure in the qualities of things, such as the comfortableness of a chair, the smoothness of a table-top, and the crispness of starched linen, because it is only a direct sense-perception, too simple to possess any claim to the higher name of beauty. Even pleasure in color, in so far as it remains a solitary, undifferentiated sensation, may be rejected on the same ground. Æsthetic experience is essentially the perception in a form of something which is not too glaringly visible, something which rewards our attention as the solution of a problem rewards the person who has puzzled over it for a time; and any pleasure in perception which comes to us too easily will be only slightly æsthetic.

Pleasure in the substance of which an object is made—gold, for instance—may also be discarded as irrelevant to our search. This, too, comes to us too easily and too directly, and is dependent on a material quality of the object. For very little of our æsthetic pleasure comes from the actual substance: if the shape and appearance of the object can be closely imitated in some other medium, as for instance in paint, our pleasure in the copy will be almost as great as our pleasure in the original. Beauty does not reside in the substance of an object but in its appearance,—or, as æstheticians usually prefer to say, in its form.

But pleasure in form is too complex to be the irreducible ultimate which we have been seeking. Our enjoyment of the slenderness, the grace, or the massiveness of a form is largely a pleasure in its vague resemblance to actual objects which have possessed the same quality—and the remainder is only a direct sensuous perception. Both may be laid aside for the reasons previously cited. Beneath these qualities lie the more strictly geometric properties of forms—squareness, roundness, and triangularity. It is perhaps possible to take some pleasure in them, but they are for the most part only intellectual concepts which are mainly useful as instruments for distinguishing one shape from another. If we become deeply absorbed in contemplation of a form we are likely to forget all about its geometrical shape; beauty seems to lie much deeper, and to be a more universal, a less narrowly limited, property of form.

Is there anything more that we can prune away? It seems to me that there is not, for we have already eliminated everything except the one property, whatever it may be, by virtue of which a form hangs together as a form, the one quality which, because it runs all through a certain plot of lights and shades on the retina, enables us to perceive that plot as a coherent unit instead of as a chaos. Remove this common bond and everything will lapse into a confusion which offers no possibility of æsthetic pleasure. And the residue of pleasure that we have left is as pure as any that can be imagined. It would remain the same if the object under contemplation were the only one in existence, it would be essentially the same in any disembodied consciousness that might be able to borrow our eyes for a moment to look at it, or in any other human consciousness. And, most important of all, it would be essentially the same, except for variations in intensity, whatever the object that evoked it. The *beauty* of the Parthenon

does not differ greatly from the beauty of a rose; it is only the complex of meanings, qualities, shapes, and magnitudes with which they are adulterated that makes them seem to differ so widely. This many-sided universality is our final assurance that the core of pleasure we have reached has a strong claim, at least, to the name beauty.

PLEASURE IN FORM

But have we perhaps gone too far? Can pleasure in the bare perception of form ever become strong enough to account for beauty, with its terrible intensity? In answering yes it must be remembered that what we actually see in beautiful objects is seldom, if ever, pure beauty, as I have defined it, but beauty adulterated with other sorts of æsthetic pleasure; yet I believe that however high the percentage of beauty in a form may rise our pleasure in the mere perception of that form will always be great enough to explain it. This pleasure is by no means a simple thing, but many-sided. It is, with a few inevitable omissions, a microcosm of the whole æsthetic experience, differing from it only in being wholly confined to a single compact and homogeneous form; and because of this compactness it tends to become extraordinarily concentrated and intense. For the same reason, each factor blends so smoothly into the rest that it is impossible to explain the whole by enumerating its parts; its character depends as much on the nature of this union as on the nature of the separate parts. We speak of the many-sidedness of beauty, but it is the many-sidedness not of a polygon but of a sphere. One can only exhibit snapshots of it taken from successive points of view and hope that they will blend into a panorama which will give an approximately correct impression of the whole. I can present only a few here, but others will be found scattered through the remaining chapters of Part II. They will recall

to the reader's mind the theoretical discussions of chapters I and II in Part I.

The simplest of these pleasures is perhaps that which comes from the economy in perception effected by organizing detached visual units into a single form. Place four lines end to end to form a quadrilateral and they will be easier, and therefore pleasanter, to look at than when they are scattered at random across a sheet of paper. If two of these lines happen to be parallel and of equal length—which means that the form is more highly organized—it will be still easier and still pleasanter to look at the figure. The colloquial description of a beautiful object as "easy to look at" strikes very close to æsthetic truth.

The more closely the various parts of a figure are related to each other the easier it will be to grasp them all with a single act of consciousness, and the more nearly their impression on consciousness will approach the quality of a musical tone. (If the reader will look intently at some irregular curve and then at a circle he will get a clearer idea of what I mean than I can convey in words.) This tone, which is a very elementary variety of meaning, is a sort of spirit which seems to permeate every part of the form. It is accompanied by a light overtone of roundness or circularity—or in other cases of squareness or triangularity—and perhaps by still higher tones of massiveness or grace, but the basic tone which dominates it consists merely of the one all-pervasive quality by which this particular combination of elements differs from chaos. The more perfectly a form is adapted to being perceived in this fashion as a single entity the stronger and sharper a tone it will be able to arouse in consciousness.

Now it happens that whenever we discover more meaning in a form than we anticipate, consciousness responds with a spurt of pleasure. Pleasure does not depend on meaning alone, or our pleasure in contemplating any human being would

be infinitely greater than our pleasure in even the most beautiful of vases, but only on the surplus over expected meaning. A vase which transcends the accustomed level of vase-meanings may give us much more æsthetic pleasure than a human being whose meanings for us do not rise above the average. It is in part because we are in the habit of expecting nothing from pure form that the tones, or æsthetic meanings, which the most highly organized specimens arouse in consciousness afford us such intense pleasure.

Our pleasure in form also contains a factor which is closely related to pleasure in resemblance. A highly organized form is one whose parts resemble one another to a greater or less extent. When we look at one we immediately recognize its neighbor, reproduced with slight modifications, and a third will remind us of both the other two. If the form is truly beautiful, any segment, choose it where we will, may serve as model and every other will be found to reproduce some aspect of it. In representative art the original model and the reproduction remain eternally separate and our pleasure is sharply dualistic, being based on a point-to-point comparison between two wholly distinct forms; in a beautiful form our pleasure in resemblance flows perpetually in a closed circuit, and because it renews itself at every point and is infinitely varied it reaches a much higher intensity. In representation, too, the meanings and the likeness that we recognize exist ready-made in our memories, while in the case of beauty we have to create them as we go, and this adds a little more to the æsthetic advantage which a beautiful form has over a merely representative one.

I cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of understanding the closeness of this relation between the representative and the creative sides of painting, for most of the errors and extravagances in æsthetic theory from Plato on may be traced to the almost universal tendency to overlook it.

THE TRANSMUTATION OF PLEASURE INTO BEAUTY

It is immeasurably easier to show that the contemplation of pure form can yield enough pleasure to account for beauty than it is to show why we call it beauty, and think of it as a property of the objective world; anything which really deserved the name of explanation would fill a volume by itself. I can do no more here than hint very briefly at the directions which such an explanation might take.

In the case of color we can take for granted this projection of a quality of consciousness into the external world, but the problem of beauty is more troublesome and calls for some analysis. It is so intangible and elusive that we distrust any explanation which sounds too simple; it has been so highly sentimentalized that we distrust any explanation which is too prosaic; and it has been invested by metaphysicians with so many transcendental meanings that we instinctively dislike any explanation which seems too materialistic. And, in addition, there are comparatively few cases in our experience in which a pleasure is projected as an objective quality.

But on the other hand there are many specially strong reasons why this core of æsthetic pleasure should be projected back into the object which arouses it. It is bound up more intimately with the very spirit of that form than most of our impressions. It flows, like the sensations of color and sound, directly into consciousness with a minimum of intellectual intervention. It is mysterious and essentially inexplicable. And, finally, it is intensely ideal in its nature—and we are impelled, by a species of psychological illusion which has never been as thoroughly investigated as it deserves to be, to attribute anything ideal to some force or quality outside ourselves.

The harder it is to explain our pleasure in a form, the more beautiful it will seem. A circle is more beautiful than a

square, an ellipse is more beautiful than a circle, and the curve of a girl's cheek is more beautiful than the ellipse—because in each case the principle of unity which animates the more beautiful form is more elusive, more difficult to grasp completely with the intellect. Consciousness, ever-resourceful, seems to have invented the sensation of beauty to enable it to deal efficiently with such mysteries very much as it invented, or evolved, the concepts of life and of depth in space to deal with similar mysteries which it could not handle with any preëxisting apparatus. Beauty is a sort of halfway stage between matter and life, a way of thinking of objects which somehow overflow the ordinary categories of space and matter without attaining the full autonomy of living beings; it might be defined as *the promotion of matter to be spirit.*

BEAUTY AND UGLINESS

Additional light may be thrown on beauty by a study of its opposite, ugliness.

There are two principal types of ugliness. The first, or primary type, arises from the simple inadaptability of a form to being grasped as a unit; the second appears when a form arouses in us some expectation of beauty and then cheats us out of it. It is by examining and analyzing the conflicts which take place within such forms that we learn the most about beauty. A circle with a meaningless bulge in one side will seem much uglier than one which merely lacks part of its circumference; the bulge interrupts the smooth flow of our attention around the curve and irritates us like an unwarranted intrusion. A giant slug will seem uglier than a lump of mud of the same shape and color because the spark of life within it leads us to expect something more highly organized and more expressive. A rotten apple looks uglier than its form alone entitles it to because it reminds us of beauty that has

been destroyed. In a painting, objects which in everyday life might pass for neutral, giving neither æsthetic pleasure nor æsthetic pain, take on a positive ugliness because we expect a higher average of beauty from art than from nature. It is because the very oldest and the very newest art both deny us the particular pleasures to which most contemporary art has accustomed us that we so often condemn them as hopelessly ugly.

In paintings, beauty and ugliness are often woven into patterns as intricate as any the artist creates with light and shade, and which of the two predominates in our first impression of a picture is usually a matter of chance,—though ugliness always starts with a considerable handicap over beauty. Ugliness, however, is only a sprinter, and in the long run beauty always wins out. In many older pictures of the Dutch and Flemish schools we see little except ugliness at first—the ugliness of their frequently disgusting subjects; but in the course of minutes, days, or years, according to the æsthetic sensitiveness of the observer, this ugliness fades out and it becomes almost impossible from thenceforth to see anything but the beauty of the painting. It is the same when the original ugliness is the ugliness of hurried, careless, or unskilful work; at first we can see only the ragged ends, but ultimately these drop out of consciousness leaving only unalloyed delight in whatever the painter was able, in spite of his handicaps, to achieve.

It is sometimes said that ugliness is needed in art as a foil to set off beauty, but it seems to me that there is enough ugliness outside art to perform that function adequately, and consequently no need of special creations of ugliness within it. Cases in which ugliness is *resolved* directly into beauty under our very eyes, as a discord in music may be resolved into a harmonious chord, must, however, be allotted a legitimate place in painting.

And it must not be forgotten that ugliness often possesses

a distinct æsthetic value of its own and need not always be explained away, as if it were a foreign substance which had no right in the picture. When ugliness is more or less uniform throughout a form, when the ugliness of one part has a rather striking similarity to the ugliness of its neighbors, it becomes capable of giving æsthetic pleasure in its own right, like any other quality, or spirit, which pervades a given form. The common habit of speaking of a particularly ugly bulldog or Berkshire hog as a "beauty" is not pure satire, but an expression, slightly exaggerated, of a fundamental æsthetic truth.

Furthermore, if ugliness can manage to contradict itself as it contradicts beauty—a sort of doubling back on its own tracks—it may turn into a caricature or a parody and thus afford us direct æsthetic pleasure of the sort which we always derive from comedy.

There is one more way in which ugliness may pass into beauty. I can suggest it most easily by asking the reader to think of beauty and ugliness as opposite sides of some curve, say a parabola, open at one end and stretching out in that direction to infinity. The various transitions from ugliness to beauty of which we have just been speaking may be called finite and located at the small, closed end of the curve; the transition which remains takes place at the open end, by way of the mysterious region which is known in mathematics as infinity and in æsthetics as "the sublime." It occurs whenever ugliness becomes sufficiently vast or sufficiently terrible to give us a thrill of pleasure instead of a shock of disgust.

But for the final justification for the use of ugliness in art we must seek some principle which does not necessitate any transformation into beauty but accepts it frankly for what it is. Such a justification may be found in the fundamental nature of human consciousness. Although it always welcomes any chance to escape from the practical, realistic world into

the ideal world of pure beauty it cannot live there permanently; it has, after all, grown up in this everyday world, and only there can it feel perfectly at home for long periods of time. Immerse it in the ideal and in the end it will suffer pangs of homesickness for troubles, difficulties, and incompleteness. Those who spend a great deal of time with art feel an increasing need to have it adulterated with some trace of these more worldly ingredients. Art, to state the case abstractly, tends in the end to break down the boundaries we have so carefully raised around it and to flow out over them into the wider field of life, becoming as indistinguishable from life as the conditions will permit. To what extent it ceases, in the course of this process, to be art is a difficult question to answer.

CHAPTER XI

FORMS IN SPACE

SATISFYING OUR EXPECTATIONS

We saw in Part I that even the artist who knows no other way of giving pleasure than depicting natural forms will modify these forms more or less as he transfers them to canvas, in order to raise our pleasure in resemblance to a maximum. As he develops a fuller understanding of the possibilities of his craft he will begin to use these modifications not merely to make the object on his canvas different from the one in nature but to make it more beautiful, and in the end he will think of this process of beautification as the chief reason for such modifications. The various methods employed in this process may be summed up under the general name of composition.

The primary task of composition, however, is not constructive but preparatory. Before it can begin to give pleasure it must quiet certain troublesome appetites which we bring to a picture. Before it can begin to make a form beautiful it must see to it that it is not hopelessly unbeautiful.

We bring to the contemplation of any form certain expectations which have been implanted in our minds by a long and continuous exposure to the force of gravity. We expect a form to be stable; we are happier in its presence if the shapes at its base are broader and heavier than those at its apex. In looking at architecture this gravitational sense becomes one of the chief sources of our pleasure, but its rôle in painting is much narrower, resembling, as I have suggested, a sleeping dog which it is better not to waken. The importance which

it is usually given in books on composition is greatly exaggerated. We read, for instance, that the popularity of the pyramidal structure in paintings may be traced to its great stability, but when we turn to some excellent example of this structure, such as Raphael's *Madonna of the Goldfinch* (Pl. 43), it is difficult to discover, by introspection, any particular pleasure that can be honestly credited to mere stability. It is even harder to detect in our pleasure in Tintoretto's *St. Ursula* (Pl. 65), or in Correggio's *Madonna with St. George* (Pl. 52), any element which depends on their conformity to the law of gravitation. It is only when we destroy this conformity by turning a print of one of these pictures upside down, and note the amount of discomfort that results, that we can appraise at their true value these invisible, and probably instinctive, concessions to our sense of stability, and learn that these values lie almost entirely on the negative side of the scale.

THE ELEMENTS OF PICTORIAL FORM

There are other groups of these expectations, clustered about the gateway to æsthetic enjoyment and passing silently on all applicants for admission, but as they are all sources of positive pleasure as well it is not easy to disentangle this unconscious element. Among them, for example, is the group which asks for symmetry and unity in a form—which expects both sides of a picture to be very much alike, as in Cimabue's *Madonna* (Pl. 45) or Mantegna's *Madonna with Saints* (Pl. 50), and yet, as in these pictures, dominated and united by some strong central group. This demand may originate, like the gravitational one, in experience, and especially in experience of those highly unified and markedly symmetrical objects whom we know as living beings, or in the symmetry and unity of our own bodies, or in the circumstance that either symmetry or unity in an external form makes it much easier for

our minds to grasp; for our present purposes this origin does not greatly matter. Our chief interest for the moment is in noting that part of this demand is of the nature of a handicap which must be overcome before the other part can begin its natural function of supplying us with pleasure. We always start, that is, below the æsthetic zero, and part of the effort of composition must be devoted to making up this handicap. But having once recognized the presence of this subliminal factor in appreciation we can proceed to an examination of its more conscious elements, remembering always, however, that the importance of any compositional form can never be measured wholly by the direct, positive contribution it makes to our æsthetic pleasure.

In the earliest stages of composition form means to a painter the form of the picture as a whole,—not, of course, the shape of the canvas, but that general arrangement of colors on its surface which enables one to distinguish, say, one square canvas from another at a considerable distance. The framework of this form is constructed not by any minute modification of details but by arranging the most striking things in the picture in some definite pattern on the canvas. When they mark out, for instance, some simple geometrical form such as the triangle in the *Madonna of the Goldfinch,* the diamond-shaped figure in the *Madonna with St. George,* the large and small circles in the *Little Loves* (Pl. 66), or the "S" in the *St. Ursula* they will not only be much easier to perceive as a whole —and therefore serve to draw the picture together as a unit— but will also, since the shape they outline is never drawn in full, afford us the pleasure of constructing this shape anew every time we look at them.

Another type of pattern, or organization, is less rigidly geometrical, being based solely on our constant readiness to take pleasure in coincidences. The sight of similar things happen-

ing at a series of related points is always exhilarating,—as, for example, driving across a city and seeing at every other crossing a traffic officer being bitten by a dog. In a picture, even the presence of similar things at similar points may be a source of pleasure. As soon as we have observed an important object occupying a given point in one half of the picture we are automatically prepared to be pleased at finding another striking object at the corresponding point in the other half. Accenting any given point *sensitizes* us to all the other points which are related to it in any simple and distinctive way. In painting, the relationship which is used most is that of equidistance from the vertical axis of the canvas, as in Mantegna's *Madonna with Saints,*—probably because this relationship also produces symmetry, balance, and more or less gravitational stability. (There is a great premium on multiplying the relationships between the various details in a work of art, because they are multiplied in the most literal sense of the word: in art, the whole is not the sum but the product of its parts.) In *The Angel Leaving Tobias* (Pl. 68), however, Rembrandt used as his axis the diagonal from the upper right- to the lower left-hand corner. In the *Entombment* (Pl. 6) Caravaggio employed both the vertical axis and the diagonal, and in the *Madonna with St. George* (Pl. 52) Correggio managed to bring the other diagonal into play as well; while in the *Magnificat* (Pl. 44) the similar points to be accented were chosen with reference not to any line but to a single central point. It should be noted, too, that the placing of a single figure on any such central point or line, as in either the Correggio or the Mantegna, constitutes in itself a coincidence, and as such is a source of æsthetic satisfaction. All of these fundamental frameworks, however, are valued far more for the strength and stability which they add to the picture than for the immediate pleasure which they yield.

KEEPING THE EYES MOVING

The most surprising, and the most confusing, thing about the æsthetic machines which we call works of art is the great variety of functions performed by each of their parts. The balancing of objects across a central line which I have just accounted for by the pleasure in coincidence which it yields also serves the very important end of keeping one's eyes ranging back and forth across the picture. Movement of this sort does not take place automatically in response to any sort of picture; if an æsthetic machine is poorly designed it may stick on a dead center just like any other poorly designed machine,—or, to speak in strictly pictorial terms, one's eye may be caught by a single striking object and never be able to escape from it. One tires quickly enough of looking at it, but when one tries to escape from it there is nowhere else to go, no other point in the picture on which one's eye can rest for a moment to break the monotony; there is no relief short of turning away from the picture entirely. It is of the greatest æsthetic importance to keep the eyes moving smoothly and easily; such continuous movement is quite as necessary in the reading of a picture as it is in the reading of a book.

But the back-and-forth movement which symmetry assures will also become monotonous in time; we need something more intricate and varied. The most dependable mechanism for performing this particular operation may be found in line. A good line possesses the same sort of interest as a good sentence or a good story; anyone who has once embarked on it is compelled to follow wherever it may lead him until he has reached the end. The lines of a fine Rubens or Titian carry one around the picture with the magnificent sweep of a roller-coaster, and throw in a thrill at every turn. It is the almost total absence of such curves in Giotto that makes his compositions somewhat cold and tight, and those of Puvis

de Chavannes (Pl. 20) suffer from a similar malady. This use of line as a highway for the eye probably reaches its height in Botticelli's *Magnificat* (Pl. 44). Its curves weave in and out like ripples crossing and recrossing a small pool; and instead of interrrupting each other like the lines in Mantegna's *Madonna* (Pl. 50) they all work harmoniously together to the same end; one's eyes slip along them as easily as if they were floating down a purling rivulet, and whenever a line branches the divergence is so gradual that one follows one arm or the other with no consciousness of having made a deliberate choice, and in returning again to the same fork is quite as likely to choose the other path. It is a fascinating maze of lines in which one has no desire either to escape or to rest.

Such lines are not always lines in the strictest sense of the word; in the *Magnificat* one of the finest of them is only a chain of overlapping arms and hands. Continuity of any sort will serve the purpose,—and in Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (Pl. 40) even continuity is dispensed with, for there are several gaps in every important line. The painter seems to have depended on the momentum which the eye acquires in following any one segment to carry it across the break which separates it from the next. When some broad form narrows down sharply to a point, as in so many of Correggio's figures (Pl. 52), the eye receives a still stronger forward impetus; and the impact when it reaches the other side produces a slight spirt of pleasure, such as one receives when an orchestra, after pausing for a beat or two, crashes suddenly into sound again. Many pictures, of course, do not employ anything that can really be called a line as motive power but only strings of points, or accents, properly disposed about the canvas.

ATTENTION AND BALANCE

Much of the comfort or discomfort which we feel in looking at a picture may be explained in terms of attention. Why,

to begin with a very simple case, do we say that one picture "fills" the wall on which it hangs, but that another is much too small for the space in which it is placed? We may say, I think, that it is only when a picture is unable to call our eyes back, smoothly, powerfully, and involuntarily, from any point in that space to which they may have wandered that it seems too small—or when it is unable to draw them strongly and easily to itself from any point in the boundary of that space, but is so weak in attractive power that the journey to it is inevitably broken and rather aimless. Within the space that an object can dominate easily it is a pure pleasure for the eye to make little sallies out from it, only to be drawn irresistibly back a moment later,—and when the eye is denied this pleasure, as in the case of a picture which is too big for its wall, one is likely to have an active sense of discomfort and restraint.

The problem of analyzing attention within a picture is more complex, for we have many objects to deal with instead of one and each one trespasses more or less on territory which naturally belongs to its neighbors. I should like to suggest as a working hypothesis a law that equal areas of a picture must attract equal quantities of attention, and assert that if this law is approximately followed the result will be æsthetic comfort and satisfaction while if it is more closely followed the result will be pure beauty. Of course this law cannot be applied too mathematically in any case; we cannot lay off a set of equal squares or rectangles on the surface of the canvas and insist that each of these sections should attract an equal amount of attention. But if we choose the areas to be compared according to the natural topography of the picture, and allow sufficiently for the extraordinary drawing-power of a single sharply-defined object set in a comparatively empty space, our tentative law will at least prove to be a valuable instrument for æsthetic exploration. It must be remembered,

however, in applying it that a picture is seldom an æsthetic democracy but nearly always a hierarchy,—that is to say, that most of the details or objects which attract our attention in a picture fall within the sphere of influence of some larger or more powerful object and are definitely subordinate to it. When attention is to be led from one of these dominant objects to another it is modulated down from the first through a diminishing series of minor objects and then up to the second through a similar increasing series. Giotto's *Death of St. Francis* (Pl. 1) illustrates the dangers of a democratic, or spotty, distribution of attention; it should be contrasted with Greuze's *Punished Son* (Pl. 3), in which the modulation from the dead body to the surrounding figures of the mourners is beautifully hierarchical.

A number of instructive experiments in the distribution of attention may be performed with an empty postcard frame and a few coins. Lay the frame flat on the table and place a half-dollar inside it so that it will be equidistant from the top, the bottom, and the left side. One's eyes can now move with equal ease from the coin to any one of these three sides, and the equality between these various pulls on one's attention affords a certain pleasure. But when we glance toward the fourth side of the frame we are likely to feel a slight uneasiness, for the force pulling our attention away from the coin is so much weaker here. This can be partially remedied by laying another half-dollar at the corresponding point in the right half of the frame, but the tension between the two coins will still be weaker than the tension between each coin and the nearest side of the frame. This can be corrected in turn by moving the coins toward each other until all three tensions along the horizontal axis seem equal. As the difference between these horizontal tensions and the four vertical tensions between the coins and the top and bottom of the frame is slight, this arrangement will be found to give con-

siderable pleasure,—and more, I think, than any other that could be substituted for it. If we repeat the experiment with silver dollars the pleasure will be less in each position because they are too large for a frame of that size, and dimes will be found too small. If a dime is substituted for one of the half-dollars in the final position both coins will have to be moved in order to reach a maximum of pleasure, the larger one nearer the center and the smaller one out toward the edge.

It seems to me that whenever the greatly overworked and sadly misused word balance is encountered in connection with painting it should be interpreted as a reference to some such equality between pulls on our attention, for the gravitational explanation which is usually proffered in textbooks on composition is so remote from the actual facts of the case that it is more misleading than helpful. In fact I might say even more and call it the most absurd myth that has ever sprung out of the study of painting.

Balance, in the sense of an evenly distributed surface-tension, is probably the most widespread type of composition, and any first-rate picture will serve as an example. But balance in the narrower sense of a balance between definite objects has been less carefully studied. Its greatest master is Albert Cuyp, and Piero della Francesca, Watteau, Puvis de Chavannes, and Tintoretto are among his closest rivals.

COMPOSITION IN THREE DIMENSIONS

Most people regard a picture primarily, if not wholly, as a surface, and accordingly it is to making this surface beautiful that the painter must devote the greater part of his powers as a composer. Yet since he is creating behind this surface an illusion of three-dimensional space he must, to some extent at least, compose in this third dimension as well as in the other two.

It is clear that Tintoretto's *St. Ursula* (Pl. 65) was planned first of all as a composition in space instead of as a composition on a plane surface. As soon as one lets it expand back to its full depth, instead of looking at it merely as an arrangement of forms on a flat canvas, the great "S" sweeping so gracefully in from the sea and the angel arching above it make it wonderfully rich and impressive. In his *Last Supper* (Pl. 41) the metamorphosis is still more striking. The servants fall into place in a single great circle about the diners; the long table becomes the principal diameter of this circle; the group of angels at the right, which in the two-dimensional view looks as if it had been crowded in hastily to fill an empty corner, assumes a position of great structural importance as the apex of a cone whose base is the right half of the great circle; and the whole composition ceases to look haphazard and overcrowded and becomes spacious and orderly.

Tintoretto's *Finding of the Body of St. Mark* (Pl. 74) presents an especially interesting case because its compositional structure changes completely when it is expanded from two dimensions to three. As a plane composition it is built around the web of lines, some of them broken but all easily recognizable, which radiate from the outstretched hand of the saint, at the extreme left; but when we expand it into a space the heavy, vaulted hall which bounds it immediately becomes its basic structure, with the uplifted lid of the tomb at the end as a vivid focal point.

Poussin composed almost exclusively in three dimensions; many of his pictures make only æsthetic nonsense when they are viewed as arrangements of forms on a flat surface. Steen's apparently rather jumbled compositions may also often be reduced to order by grouping the figures in a series of receding parallel planes.

For many painters empty space is only an embarrassing pause which must be filled as deftly as possible. Even for

Poussin it was little more than a neutral medium which enabled him to arrange his solid objects at pleasing distances from each other. But a few painters have been as much interested in space itself as in the objects which it contains. Veronese's (Pl. 42) and Bassano's space does not merely contain or separate objects; it sets them off, creates brilliant contrasts between their solidity and its own emptiness, and even attracts attention as a thing with shapes and qualities of its own. In the *Madonna of the Goldfinch* (Pl. 43) Raphael balanced his massive three-figure group not against some other mass of solids but against the great expanse of space around them. Perugino, although his arrangement of figures, viewed merely as solids, is almost naïve, was a great master in the art of using these figures to emphasize and characterize his space; they expand it, soften it, dignify it, and impregnate it with an emotional quality as indescribable as the fragrance of spring. Certain other painters, also, such as Lorenzo di Credi, Ostade, Quentin Matsys, and Albert Bouts, who if judged by any other standard could not be awarded the highest honors, stand out clearly in memory by virtue of their rare sensitiveness to the contours and volumes of empty space, and to the many relationships which exist between that space and the objects which it contains.

THE REFINEMENTS OF COMPOSITION

In an intellectual age like the present, in which a great many people had rather study a picture than enjoy it, and not a few had rather read about it than look at it, there is always the danger that these simple and definite, but very elementary, compositional forms will be overvalued merely because they are so easy to point out and to describe. In reality their simplicity and their definiteness are æsthetic handicaps, for

they keep the flow of pleasure very low. Like meanings, they come too near being ready-made to afford the maximum of æsthetic enjoyment. Their chief function is that of a scaffolding on which we may stand to perform certain æsthetic operations which cannot be performed without undue effort at any lower level. It is only when these elementary forms are repeated an almost infinite number of times on a variety of smaller scales, and are at the same time modified, modulated, subdivided, intertwined and intermingled in a single intricate network of form that the whole structure begins to yield pleasure of the richness, fineness, and intensity that we expect from art. And all the finer details of this structure defy analysis by any of the methods or instruments which we now possess.

A painter begins rather casually by arranging the principal objects in his picture in one of these elementary forms, somewhat as a musician starts his composition by writing the key-signature at the beginning of a staff, and then plunges into the really laborious part of his task, which is the modification of a thousand lesser details to make each one slightly more beautiful, and the harmonization of each of them with each other and with the dominant key-form. Only in the very earliest stages is his unit the complete object; as he progresses he works down to smaller and smaller details until he arrives almost at the limit of visibility. In looking at a Velasquez or a Vermeer one often feels as if the painter had tried to conceal his large-scale composition in order to concentrate attention on the more minute parts of the work; with such a picture, as with a peach, one forgets shape in the enjoyment of the bloom that covers every part of the surface. Chardin managed to secure as fine a bloom without sacrificing the larger, simpler forms; and Titian, although he never carried composition to this almost microscopic level, modulated down so marvelously

from the large forms with which he began to the very small ones at the end of his series that his pictures seem, as form-structures, almost superhuman.

It was inattention to these minutiæ of composition that made most of the pictures painted before 1500 so stiff and awkward and hard; and neglect of the larger forms, which most of the primitives could manage so well, that made most early Innesses look like patchwork quilts and most Monets of all periods like colored fogs. Which of these deficiencies one minds the least is largely a matter of temperament. Romantics and sentimentalists, who dislike to believe that anything can be explained, view the grosser facts of composition with as much disfavor as they do the grosser facts of life and are inclined to prefer effects in which they play no visible part. Intellectuals, on the other hand, being naturally disposed to ignore anything which cannot be explained, are inclined to ignore the effects which are produced by minute, invisible means and attribute all the beauty in a picture to the largest and most obvious of its structures.

But when a man has emancipated himself from these prejudices he values both of these types of composition equally, using what he knows about the larger and simpler forms to guide him through the picture as if they were chart and compass, and following the smaller forms more instinctively, as a woodsman follows signs in a forest which are imperceptible to a tenderfoot. No one can depend on either method alone to suffice for all pictures: the very stiffest of quattrocento altarpieces contains something which no formula can ever reveal; and, on the other hand, the most careless of improvisations will have some ground-plan which is the indispensable key to its whole structure.

In studying the enjoyment of pictures it is necessary to proceed step by step, yet no such measured, logical exploration of a work of art can ever reveal its full beauty, however

scientifically it may be conducted. Such methods yield their own æsthetic reward, and many never grow out of them into anything finer, yet they are in reality only slow rehearsals for the final goal of æsthetic endeavor, which is the ability to perceive *the whole picture at once,* in a single glorious instant, as Mozart reported that he heard his own symphonies before he finally set them down on paper. It is an æsthetic welding process, whose object is the reducing of the whole work to a single molten jewel,—and everything that precedes it is only a pouring of fuel into the furnace or a series of experiments in technique. Its full accomplishment is perhaps as rare as the sight of the Holy Grail was in the days of King Arthur, and it is often very fleeting; but when it is once attained its duration is a matter of comparatively little importance; our experience with that particular picture, however brief the climactic stage may be, is then complete.

CHAPTER XII

LIGHT AND COLOR

LIGHT AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR FORM

Most of the elementary compositional forms of which we spoke in the last chapter may be built up with patches of light quite as well as with lines or objects. In *Atalanta and Hippomenes* (Pl. 71) the principal lights coincide so closely with the principal objects that it is not easy to distinguish between them, but in the *Girl with a Wineglass* (Pl. 79) the lights which fall on a number of minor objects such as collars, cuffs, and napkins create a definite and interesting pattern of their own, and they are also balanced across the diagonal from the upper left- to the lower right-hand corner, an axis which plays only a minor part in the object-structure of the composition.

The process of composing in light is a constant struggle between two opposite tendencies which are inherent in the nature of light. One springs from a desire to take advantage of its great carrying power, and always makes for a fundamental simplicity. In a picture of ordinary size most of the *objects* melt indistinguishably into the background as soon as one has moved a few yards away from it, but its basic pattern of light and shade, if simply designed, will stand out clearly as long as the picture itself is visible. As it is a great advantage to a picture which hangs in a large gallery in competition with others to be able to attract spectators from a considerable distance there is always a premium on strong, clear patterns of light and shade. Ruisdael's landscapes present a particularly fine series of them. Yet on the other hand the

great flexibility of light, its freedom from the limitations of matter, and the ease with which it can be subdivided all tempt the painter to indulge in some beautifully complex pattern such as we find in Lippi's *Coronation* (Pl. 17), Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne* (Pl. 40), and Veronese's *Rape of Europa* (Pl. 42). The greatest composers can usually combine complexity with simplicity, as Titian did in the *Bacchus*.

TYPES OF COMPOSITION PECULIAR TO LIGHT

All light-patterns in painting, widely as they may differ in other respects, will be found to contain one invariable feature,—a single point in which light rises to a higher intensity than it reaches anywhere else in the picture. This point performs the same æsthetic function as the apex of a cone, it establishes a center to which every other point is subordinate and organizes the picture into a more organic whole. It is comparable in importance to the geometric center of the canvas. These two points occasionally coincide but not often, for there seems to be a special æsthetic virtue in introducing into a picture two different compositional systems which compete everywhere for attention, very much as in poetry the natural rhythm of speech and the arbitrary rhythm of the verse compete for control of the words.

To return for a moment to balance, we shall find that in working with light much more use is made of a balance between opposites than in other types of composition. In Zurbaran's *St. Margaret* (Pl. 25), for example, there is a very definite balance between the light tone of the handbag and the dark tone of the coat. The balance between solid matter and empty space which we examined in the last chapter is not always easy to grasp because of the great difference in quality between the two elements, but the difference between light and dark, in the intensities in which they occur in painting, is comparatively slight. The presence of both is needed to

give vitality to a picture,—for the uniform darkness of a Whistler nocturne, the paleness of a Twachtman, or the gray monotony of a Bouguereau or a Bastien-Lepage are only exotics in painting which soon grow tiresome,—but it matters very little at any particular point whether light is balanced against light or against dark.

Such balances between dark and light are perhaps oftener described as contrasts, because the intensification of each element by its opposite, described in an earlier chapter as simultaneous contrast, counts for more æsthetically than the mere balance between them. Each is needed to set the other off,—just a few straight lines are needed to bring out the full beauty of a system of curves, as we may discover by contrasting Signorelli's *Souls of the Damned* (Pl. 11), from which they were omitted, with Moretto's *St. Nicholas of Bari* (Pl. 55), in which they have been inserted with the greatest skill. But in painting, this contrast between light and dark must be used with great caution. In some very simple art, like that of block-prints, it may become the very soul of a composition, but in the more delicate of the graphic arts it is capable, if used to excess, of reducing the whole structure to a sort of pictorial melodrama, such as may be found in the cheap, flashy and sensational compositions of Franz van Mieris the Elder,—and occasionally in Caravaggio, Ribera, and Adraien van der Werff.

This perpetual alternation between light and dark also supplies a picture with another essential æsthetic virtue, commonly known as variety. Signorelli's *Souls of the Damned* and Lippi's *Coronation* display some measure of it because the lights and darks are so thoroughly broken up; but in both pictures the shapes and sizes of these patches are too monotonously alike. The maximum of variety can be attained only, as in the *Bacchus and Ariadne* (Pl. 40), by constantly varying the shape, size, and intensity of the spots of light and the patterns in which they are combined, so that the passage of

the eye across the picture is not merely a series of uninteresting repetitions but a definite progression.

When the transition from light to dark takes place more gradually it is known as modulation. Balance, contrast, and variety are more striking but modulation assays much higher in pure beauty. It is the equivalent, for light, of curvature in lines and surfaces. The primary function of these light-curves, in representative painting, is of course the delineation of a curved surface; but for any given surface any one of a number of curves will serve almost equally well and the painter is free to choose whichever one seems most beautiful in itself or harmonizes best with all the other light-curves in the picture. In fact, in dealing with light he enjoys a wider margin of freedom than in any other branch of his art, because, as I pointed out in Chapter III, we are less familiar with light than with any other aspect of the external world. When an artist in his desire to make his picture beautiful distorts a shape, as Botticelli and Cézanne so often did, it arouses an instinctive antagonism in us which is not easily overcome; and learning to forget the distortion and see the beauty is apt to be a long process. But when a Rembrandt takes even greater liberties with the natural forms of light, also for the sake of beauty, we see the beauty immediately and are not even aware, until we have been told, that the natural aspects of light have been tampered with. This wide margin of freedom naturally makes light one of the most desirable of all mediums in which to compose; beauty can be produced here at a lower cost in representative truth than anywhere else.

Under the painter's brush light sometimes becomes dramatic or terrible, as in Tintoretto's *Finding of the Body of St. Mark* (Pl. 74) or Rembrandt's *Resurrection* (Pl. 15), but artists have oftener been inclined to draw from it some simple, elusive tone which none of their other instruments can be made to utter. Sometimes it is the cool mystery of Canaletto's

thin, grayish light; sometimes the soft, smoky radiance of Andrea del Sarto or the heavenly luminosity of Angelico; and occasionally a sort of tension, like the tautness of a bent spring or the compelling rhythm of a polonaise, such as one finds again and again in Greco, Hals, Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Brouwer, Crivelli, and Velasquez. It is as if light had captured their minds, like a powerful drug, and driven them along at its own tempo. Or again, it may be, as in Jordaens, some glutinous quality in the light which seems to bind together more firmly whatever objects it falls on, and to give to the whole picture a pearly beauty of surface which suggests nothing so much as a pailful of glittering minnows. Or this simple tone may expand, as in De Hooch, to the complexity of a musical composition. His sunbeams lie across a room like harp-strings; and from some dusky corner the half-shadows rise in a singing crescendo to a patch of golden brown or flaming red in the center of the room, only to die away again as melodiously, and rise and die through a hundred lesser phrases, until we are hardly sure whether we are looking at painted light or listening to distant music.

PSEUDO-COLORISTS

Most of the great composers in light are inclined to diminish the variety and intensity of their hues and work in a monotone of brown or silver; and when such a master departs from this custom and indulges in a riot of hue he is more than likely, in a world which is very ignorant of both light and color, to pass for a great colorist. Few people distinguish between the gift for manipulating intensities, which makes a great master of light, and the gift for manipulating hues, which makes a master of color.

Andrea del Sarto owes his reputation as a colorist largely to the accident of birth. If he had been a native of Venice,

a land of colorists, no one would have thought of calling him anything more than a painter of light; but in Florence, where everyone else approached color either timidly or awkwardly, his fluent, masterful way with it won him a reputation which he hardly deserves. He could make a single patch of color as shimmeringly beautiful as a sand-dune in bright sunlight, but that was only because he could modulate and control so perfectly the intensities of his light. He could construct at will a perfectly harmonious chord of two, three, or four hues, but his power over hue ended with that; his interest and his skill were both centered on light.

Angelico's mastery of single hues was even greater than Andrea's, for he could make them glow with an inner light as if they were rubies and sapphires embedded in his canvas; and whatever colors he happened to use seemed to harmonize as naturally as those in the rainbow. Yet it seems clear that these harmonies were not *composed* in any but the most elementary senses of the word, but are only haphazard, planless mosaics of color. Nearly all the beauty that he *planned* in his compositions was constructed with light.

Correggio was more sensitive to hue than either Andrea or Angelico, yet he could spin from it nothing comparable in delicacy and beauty to those transparent, barely perceptible shadows which drift across the flesh of his nudes like wind-ripples in a field of grain, or in power to those flames of light which blaze across the *St. Jerome* and the *Night;* and for the sake of some such effect of light he was willing to commit harsh, grating offenses against good color such as no sensitive colorist could tolerate on his canvas for an instant.

RELATIONS BETWEEN HUES

The lesser colorists rely on all sorts of external devices for drawing their colors together into a compact whole. Francia,

for instance, used light very much as a potter uses a glaze: there is a sheen or glint on every patch of his color which draws them all into a single color-system, just as viewing them through glass or under water would. And the deep, liquid shadows which separate them serve the same end, though in slightly different fashion. Carlo Dolci, Dosso Dossi, Burne-Jones, and Crivelli all employed the same device, in a variety of forms.

Other men fall back on the mechanical trick of repeating, or echoing, some important patch of color in smaller patches throughout the picture. This is quite as effective with color as it is with curves and straight lines, for when one's eye lights repeatedly on some familiar hue, instead of having to deal each time with a new one, the picture quickly takes on some semblance of order and beauty—but this is composition with color rather than composition in color.

The greatest colorists base their color-structures as far as possible on the purely chromatic relations between hues. Any given hue may become the keynote of a color-scale just as any given musical tone may become the keynote of a musical scale. Out of the multitude of possible hues there will be a few which possess more similarities to the basic hue than any of the rest and these will form with it a definite color-scale, which the colorist will use as the central skeleton of his color-structure. Whenever the eye passes from one hue in this scale to another the recognition of the similarity between the two starts a little jet of pleasure in consciousness, and the recognition of the relationships which bind them all together in a single system creates a sense of order, structure, and beauty which is never aroused by a picture whose hues are chosen at random.

The most definite of these chromatic relationships is that which connects two complementary colors; but others which include a larger number of hues are more practical for most

of the composer's purposes. One scale may be formed by mixing with any set of primary hues equal amounts of white, and other similar scales by substituting black or gray for the white. A different series may be built up by adding to any one hue varying amounts of either white, black, or gray, and still another by selecting hues which lie at equal distances along the spectrum, such as red, yellow, and orange. These are only a few examples chosen from hundreds of possible scales; any group of notes which are related in any uniform fashion or have any one quality in common will unite to form a scale. And of course in practice the painter passes frequently from one scale to another, by means of a great variety of modulations, in an attempt to compromise with the rigorous demands of representation. But in spite of this complexity the notion of a similarity between hues will serve as a master-key to the whole subject of color-composition. A deep, saturated purple and a pale bluish green make a poor combination because they have so little in common, but the same purple would go very well with orange, lavender, or dark red because we should find something in each of them to remind us of it.

The composer in color must also consider carefully the shape, location, and size of the patch which he allots to each hue, for these four elements, shape, location, size, and hue, are connected by a sort of algebraic equation. No picture will tolerate more than a certain amount of any given hue; its position among the other hues is very important; and by varying the size and shape of each patch of it the picture may be made or ruined. This complex relationship is not easy to explain but it is one of the surest of æsthetic facts.

MELODIES, CHORDS, AND MODULATIONS

In one type of color-composition these related hues are arranged to form a melody, in which one's pleasure comes from

passing successively from one to the other. Sometimes these tones are placed side by side in the order in which they are supposed to be read, but oftener one is obliged to experiment with them to discover the precise order which yields the greatest pleasure—yet to a sensitive eye this is neither a laborious nor a difficult task. Angelico, Francia, Andrea del Sarto, Gerard David, and Rubens were all good melodists, and their pictures are excellent ones to begin on.

In other pictures the principal color-groups are designed to be grasped simultaneously as chords instead of successively as melodies. Lay a strip of white paper across a somewhat wider strip of red and you have created the simplest possible chord of three notes. Cover one of these outer strips of red with its complementary green and you will have a chord of much higher æsthetic value, because of the greater variety within it and the attraction between the two complementaries. Almost any pair of hues will form a good chord when separated by some neutral tone—white, gray, black, or gold—but without the help of these neutrals the problem of harmonizing pure, saturated colors becomes rather difficult, and the difficulty increases rapidly when we advance to chords of four or five tones. But if the neutral tones are used again, this time to *dilute* the primary colors, they will be found to combine much more readily than when used at full strength.

When two hues lie too close together on a color-scale they cease to give pleasure either as notes in a melody or as notes in a chord, but a smooth modulation from one to the other may be made extremely beautiful,—modulations such as Veronese gives us, from the bluish greens in the shadows of a dress to the lighter, yellowish greens in the parts where the high-lights fall, or Lorenzo di Credi in his lovely transitions from the full blue of the zenith to the much whiter blue of the horizon, or Rüdisühli in the great organ-tone crescendos with which he sweeps from red to orange and from orange to olive-green in

his studies of autumn leaves. Cuyp, Claude, Corot, Carrière, George Fuller, Murphy, Tryon and the other tonalists use very few melodies or chords in their color-structures but depend almost entirely on modulation. Modulation, as a matter of fact, is the one thing the painter cannot afford to neglect in his handling of color. He may omit quite safely any or all of the brilliant, striking combinations of color, but as soon as he tries to omit modulation his color goes dead on his hands and his picture turns stale and flat. It is only in some very elementary color-composition, such as a block-print or a poster, that modulation can be dispensed with. In painting, either hue or intensity must change incessantly.

STRUCTURE

But neither melodies, chords, nor modulations are in themselves complete enough to satisfy our demand for some structure which shall embrace every spot of color in a picture; they are laid-on ornaments rather than foundations or frameworks.

A very simple but satisfying structure may be created, as we may see in almost any picture by Teniers, Brouwer, Spitzweg, Goya, or Velasquez, by setting a single chord of brilliant hues against a duller background of olives, grays, and russets.

The painters of the early Renaissance thought that the secret of color-structure lay in using the three primary colors, in large quantities, as its base,—or, for variety, the three secondary colors. Later men put their faith in a pair of complementaries—Vermeer's studies in blue and yellow are brilliant examples of this method—or in keying the whole composition to a single hue.

There are two ways in which a picture may be dominated by a single hue. In the more obvious one, some trace of this hue is added to every other color in the picture so that it determines the prevailing tone of the whole composition. But

in the other method the dominant hue is merely related so intimately to every other hue, and so much of the brilliancy and charm of each of them is made to depend on the presence of this one, that if it is covered for an instant the whole picture grows dull and lifeless. It is the keystone of the color-arch —or the necessary catalyzer in whose absence none of the color-reactions which keep the picture æsthetically alive can proceed. In Rubens it is usually a blue or a red; in Watteau, most often a rich wine-red; while in Rembrandt it is most likely to be a yellow.

Velasquez's color-structures have a certain architectural quality which is far commoner in the realm of form than it is in color. They do not suggest the mechanical boldness and brilliance of an arch but rather the stability of ordinary good masonry; they are strong, solid walls of color. His individual tones may fall short of the jewel-like transparency of Angelico's or the radiance, as of stained glass, which we find in Redon, but they all fit together as smoothly and strongly as blocks of perfectly cut granite. Gerard David and the Van Eycks may also be termed architects in color, but although David's edifices are somewhat more restful than Velasquez's and the Van Eyck's more spacious, they never achieve his awe-inspiring mass and solidity.

There is always a tendency to link up color-structures with the other compositional forms in a picture, one aspect of which we have already noted in speaking of the shapes and sizes of color-patches. Luini and Francia specialized in connecting color with solid form and line, giving to each of these three elements so much of the same quality and flavor that one's eye slips with unusual ease from one to the other and feels them all as integral parts of a single composition. Constable went even further and melted form and color into a single plastic amalgam of blue, green, brown, gray, and white, as homogeneous and as formless as a sea-anemone left on its rock

by the receding tide. A Constable is no mere patchwork of sky, trees, cows, a house, and a brook; each object is as inseparable a part of the whole as the features are of a face, and the *picture* is the spirit which shines out through all of them at once. Cézanne achieved a similar compactness and unity, but did it by subordinating color to form rather than by amalgamating the two on equal terms.

Whenever we consider the color of a picture as a whole one requirement appears which, although not exactly structural, is quite as indispensable as structure,—a balance between the warm colors and the cold. The words warm and cold are misleading here for they are used merely as symbols for a complex of qualities, of which temperature is one of the least, but in spite of their inappropriateness they seem to serve the purpose better than any others that have been brought forward to replace them. The warm colors, of course, are the colors in the red half of the spectrum, together with the compounds which are dominated by them, and the cold colors those in the blue half, together with their compounds. The æsthetic demand that both shall be represented in every composition springs partly from our crude hunger for variety of hue, partly from our pleasure in the contrast between complementaries, partly perhaps from some purely physiological appetite for an approximately equal stimulation of our whole mechanism of color-perception, but chiefly, I think, from a psychological need to offset the vague associations which cling to one group of hues with the associations which cling to the other. The warm colors suggest, remotely, fire, blood, sunlight, splendor, and the excitement of danger; the cold ones, the emptiness of the sky, the coldness and the perils of the sea, the hardness and inhumanity of rocks, gray steel, grass, and many other things that are cold, hard, or inert; and each of these suggestions needs to be relieved by some hint of its opposite. A composition in warm colors alone is over-stimulating

and oppressive, and one that contains only cold hues is harsh or uninspiring; if color is to be made as agreeable as possible both must be used, just as both men and women must be brought together to create the most agreeable human society.

COLOR AND MUSIC

The vocabulary of color is so poor that we are always eking it out with borrowings from music, and this has possibly laid undue emphasis on those qualities of color which are most closely related to music. As a matter of fact, it is the lesser colorists, such as Francia and Hondecoeter, whose color is most musical; Veronese and the other great ones draw from it lighter and more ethereal tones,—tones, that is to say, which seem more characteristic of light than of sound. Veronese could not be compared to any composer heavier in touch than Debussy, nor to any instrument with a tone more massive than a violin's; and the words which are most characteristic of music, such as sonorous and melodious, are all too heavy for his iridescent webs of color. When he plays on color he gives us, not an imitation of a composition in some other medium, but an evocation of the pure spirit of color. It is not music but a sort of chromatic wizardy.

Watteau is also a wizard, and an alchemist to boot—anything but a musician. The color that he creates cannot even be described, in the common phrase, as liquid; it is a vapor,—the perfume that emanates from a scene or the atmosphere that surrounds it; one can hardly be said to *perceive* its essential flavor, it steals into consciousness as if through some unknown sixth sense. He is to the Paters and Lancrets among whom he is so often hung as the fragile, satiny bloom of a cactus is to the dull branches that support it—and it is only this fragility that holds him in a rank somewhat lower than Veronese's. Color cannot produce its maximum effect in

painting unless it possesses a certain mass and solidity. Odilon Redon, for instance, is even more immaterial than Watteau, and this immateriality nullifies, for most spectators, a great deal of the rare beauty of his color. Too many of his color-structures have the thinness and strangeness of a dream, and pass through consciousness with the swiftness of a beam of light instead of driving themselves home there like a ten-penny nail. He lacked the vast earthly force which imparted to even the more commonplace passages in Rubens's color an undeniable splendor.

Turner at his best was no less a magician than Veronese and Watteau but he seldom displayed his full powers. His "Rocky Bay with Classic Figures" and his "Sunrise with a Sea-Monster" have the serene, unearthly splendor of a sunset; they force us beyond admiration into reverence for the genius that could create them; but he was too often satisfied with some lesser achievement, some over-simple harmony of color which any one of a score of painters could have produced. Inness, although he never approached Turner's supreme performances, rose oftener to the maximum of his powers and kept more consistently at a very high level. In their particular field, the evoking of incredibly beautiful color from ordinary landscapes, neither one has any serious rival except the other.

To pass from Turner, Watteau, and Veronese to Titian and Giorgione is like descending from the rarefied air of the higher Alps to warm, haze-filled valleys, for they used color not as the medium for a display of impersonal magic but as a tremendously powerful means of human expression. It is organ-music played with the *vox humana* stop. There remains, of course, the mystery which is inherent in all fine color, but that magic from another world which we find in Watteau and Veronese has disappeared.

Dosso Dossi knew the secrets of this magic but, being an incurable romantic, he used them not for the glorification of

the spirit of pure color but to surround his figures with an atmosphere of strangeness and mystery; he seems to have cared far more for strangeness than he did for beauty.

In Hondecoeter we return once more to the impersonality and objectivity of the greatest colorists—but it is shorn of both magic and mystery; his handling of color is sure and powerful, but prosaic. He is master of but one instrument, the 'cello, while the greatest men seem to conduct a whole orchestra of color.

CHAPTER XIII

COMPOSITION AND MOVEMENT

LINE AND MOVEMENT

Because line can express so many things, and especially continuity and flow, and because it can be read so easily by the average man, who is quite blind to other modes of expression, the painter of movement finds in it an indispensable auxiliary. The mere assembling of a number of moving figures in a continuous line, as in Albani's *Little Loves* (Pl. 66) and Tintoretto's *St. Ursula* (Pl. 65), intensifies the vividness of their movement. Still more may be done by employing in the delineation of the figures lines which, by virtue of their resemblance to lines that occur in the movements of other forms, carry a strong overtone of motion which, though wholly independent of the movement which these lines actually represent, blends with it and reënforces it. Nearly all the lines in Andrea del Sarto's pictures could be found in some form of running water; and this, together with his scrupulous avoidance of tense or angular lines, gives to his figures a wonderful ease and lightness. Much of the restless, birdlike quality of Tiepolo's movement (Pl. 56) may be traced to the many sudden changes of direction in his line, through one acute angle after another. Botticelli was particularly skilful in the use of these overtones, as anyone may discover by comparing the easy flow of the lines in the *Magnificat* (Pl. 44) with the statuesque inertness of Mantegna's *Madonna with Saints* (Pl. 50). Every segment in his line leads one's eye quickly and surely to the next, and nowhere in its length are there any kinks or eddies to obstruct this easy movement.

It matters comparatively little whether these overtones occur in the lines which actually depict the moving figure or in the lines of a robe or some other accessory, for in the latter case we transfer them instinctively and automatically to the figure itself. In Michelangelo's *Creation of the Sun and Moon* (Pl. 67) the greater part of the movement we feel in the figure at the right originates in his robe, thanks to the swift crescendo of its upper border and the tautness of the fold that crosses the body just above the knees. In Rembrandt's flying angel (Pl. 68) the overtones act indirectly, by making the figure feathery and buoyant and thus rendering its movement through the air more credible. Botticelli relied far more on his overtones to create an impression of movement than on the directly representative function of his lines, and in the Sistine ceiling the lines of the moving body often interrupt or dampen the flood of movement which pours from some swirling robe.

Lipps and his followers have even gone so far as to assert that in these overtones of movement lies the whole secret of beauty of form. Beauty, they say, is merely a harmony, or balance, between the various abstract movements which pervade the lines of a figure. If a mountain is beautiful it is because it *rises* gracefully from the plain; if an architectural column is beautiful it is because its sides *pull themselves together* just enough to support easily the weight of the cornice or pediment above.

No one can doubt that the æsthetic importance of these abstract movement-qualities has generally been ignored, or greatly underestimated, and that their discovery was a valuable contribution to the study of art. When we have once learned to recognize them we see them everywhere and find them exceedingly interesting. If Lorenzo Monaco (Pl. 47) still holds our attention to-day it is largely because his lines curl so magnificently across his compositions,—more like buc-

caneers than like the pious saints they are supposed to represent! The most impressive thing in Titian's *Assumption,* regarded purely as a composition, is the great upward surge of the lines. The noblest elements in Rubens are the line-structures which form the framework of his finest compositions, great whirlpools of line which, catching our attention with some insignificant movement at the outer edge of the picture, draw it irresistibly into the maelstrom of tossing, boiling forms at the center. But to see in such movements, fascinating as they are, anything more than one among many tributaries to the main stream of beauty is merely to lapse once more into that narrow fanaticism from which the science of æsthetics has always suffered so severely.

COMPOSING WITH MOVEMENT

Movement, both abstract and representative, makes an excellent medium in which to compose, because it draws attention to itself so powerfully and because it is so rich in a quality which is particularly valuable in composition: direction. And when a picture contains a good deal of movement some orderly arrangement of it becomes indispensable; the penalties for neglecting composition here may be studied in Ghirlandajo's *Madonna in Glory* (Pl. 54). In form-composition it does not differ greatly from Raphael's *Madonna di Foligno* (Pl. 53), but in movement-composition the difference is enormous. In the Ghirlandajo, every head is set on every neck with precisely the same degree of stiffness, the hands all curl up against the bodies like the claws of dead birds, and the group of saints in the foreground is so confused that one has to look twice to determine whether the two nearest figures are standing or kneeling. In the Raphael, on the other hand, the necks vary greatly in flexibility, every head is given a different turn, every gesture is clearly defined and stands out in bold

relief against the background, and no one could possibly confuse the kneeling saints with the standing ones. Yet the ultimate difference lies not so much in the individual movements as in the way they are combined; Raphael's are so arranged that each one sets off the others to the greatest possible advantage, but Ghirlandajo's, viewed as a whole, are as stupid as a patch of barnacles.

Raphael's movement-composition is easy to analyze because it is planned with all the formality of an Italian garden, but Botticelli's, even though it displays more of the elusiveness of a natural landscape, is not less beautiful. His *Magnificat* is a river of hands and arms and bending heads, flowing through a meadow of gently undulating lines, and his *Spring* (Pl. 23) a grove of swaying birches. Titian, as usual, contrived to unite the best of both extremes. The ease and continuity with which his movements flow into each other suggests Botticelli, while his more grandiose effects, such as the long crescendo that culminates in the exhilarating sweep of Bacchus's arms in Plate 40, or the supple twisting of Ariadne's body which leads up to the strong outward thrust of her uplifted hand, have more of the flavor of Raphael,—yet underlying both these types there is a rich viscosity of flow which is pure Titian and has no parallel in the work of either of the earlier men.

In Rubens, one feels the lack in picture after picture of some such impressive gesture to serve as climax to a feverish series of lesser ones and prevent them from reverting to a pathless jungle of arms and legs—as the striking figure of the rising Christ does so magnificently for Greco's *Resurrection* (Pl. 16). Correggio, who composed with gestures as naturally as a modern Italian talks with them, delighted in reversing this method and using as the climax of his movement not some stirring and imposing attitude but a scarcely perceptible tremor of the muscles,—which is, however, packed with feeling and meaning. In the *Marriage of St. Catherine*

it must be sought in the soft interplay of the hands, and in the *Jupiter and Antiope* in the parted lips of the sleeping nymph. In Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* (Pl. 48) the beautiful contrast between the movement of the god and the movement of the man is brought to a brilliant focus at the point where their two forefingers meet.

In the work of at least two painters, Blake and Tintoretto, movement-composition plays so large a part that anyone who overlooks it will learn as little of them as he would of a lion by studying its stuffed skin in a museum. In any one picture of Blake's the movement-combinations may perhaps seem too simple to take so seriously, but when one has examined a dozen or two their endless variety begins to grow impressive. They range from the soaring, exultant flight of *The Vision of St. Catherine* (Pl. 70) to the tractor-like sluggishness of the *Nebuchadnezzar*, and from the powerful torsions of *Cain* and the *Fertilization of Egypt* to the fiery impetuosity of Job's Satanic visions; and Blake's fertility in devising new patterns and new progressions in which to insert these various rhythms seems inexhaustible; it is the one branch of his art in which his invention never lapsed, leaving him to a dull repetition of some previous pattern. To it he was always ready to sacrifice any other form of composition—one often encounters rivers of lines which seem only a blotch on the picture until one translates them into movement, and forms which seem greatly overcrowded until one sets them moving among themselves—and again and again he depends almost entirely on movement to provide whatever composition a picture may need. There is little else in the *St. Catherine* but the beautiful branching river of human forms, yet in so slender a work it is enough.

When one sets the figures in a Tintoretto in motion for the first time the results are likely to be even more astonishing than when one expands it from two dimensions into three.

When one looks at the *St. Ursula* as a set-piece the great palm-bearing angel seems rather stiff and overpowering, but as soon as he is set in motion he at once takes up his proper function of uniting, quickly and beautifully, the two ends of the long procession and becomes a wholly satisfactory part of the picture. And the slow grace with which the train of virgins begins to wind back and forth across the meadow grows so fascinating that it is almost impossible to return to the stage in which one regarded them only as units in a static compositional "S". In the *Last Supper,* too (Pl. 41), the bending of the heads, the outstretching of hands and arms, and the hastening back and forth of the figures of the servants works another miracle of unity and vitality.

MOVEMENT IN A SINGLE FIGURE

Some of the finest movement-compositions are comprised within the limits of a single figure. The devising of new postures and new combinations of movements for legs, arms, trunk, and head was the chief preoccupation of painters during the hundred years beginning, say, in 1475. Botticelli evolved a new rhythm for his *Judith;* Correggio, starting with the somewhat awkward and difficult position of his Danaë, performed what fifty years before would have been considered a miracle of movement; Andrea, in his *St. James,* transformed the ordinary standing position into an exceedingly lovely spiral; and Raphael created a multitude of beautiful actions, of which the swordsman in the *Judgment of Solomon* and the flying angel in the *Heliodorus* are perhaps the most notable. But the supreme master in this field was Michelangelo. He was able to make his figures more imposing by endowing them with more powerful muscles and more vigorous wills; his own imagination was nothing less than Titanic; he was as careful as Raphael to weave every wisp of movement in a body into

a single complex action, and these actions were invariably grander and more intricate than in any of his predecessors. In his finest forms every limb is impressive and interesting in itself; if none of his work had come down to us except, say, the arm of the Cumæan sibyl, in which the nervous grip of the forefinger evolves so gradually and so naturally from the vague, massive tensions of the upper arm, we should still recognize him as a very great master of movement.

GRACE

It is by means of composition of this sort that painted figures are made to look graceful. Since Herbert Spencer wrote his famous essay on the subject it has been customary to agree with him that grace is the outward expression of a perfect economy of muscular effort; the most graceful way of performing a given movement, according to this theory, is merely the most efficient way. It seems to me, however, more desirable in every way to explain grace in terms of the *distribution* of effort, or movement, throughout the body rather than in terms of such an invisible, unmeasurable, and wholly hypothetical entity as economy of effort. Who can say, with any exactness, that one particular movement is performed more efficiently than half a dozen others that resemble it? We have no instruments with which to measure such internal expenditures of effort and can only guess at the quantities involved—and the problem is much too complex to be solved by guessing. And how are we to reconcile this theory with the obvious fact that many of the most graceful movements are full of twirls and undulations which are wholly superfluous from the practical point of view but which round out and finish off the action for the æsthetic observer, somewhat as the wholly useless flutings in a Doric column complete and perfect its form. Grace, indeed, is not practical at all, but an exuberant thing that is much more like

play than like work. How can we even estimate the efficiency of movements which have no material object whatsoever, but are performed purely for the pleasure of moving? They can, in the nature of things, have no definite goal nor any predetermined course, but must develop from phase to phase as one's sense of grace and beauty dictates. And movements of this playful, spontaneous sort are likely to be the most graceful of all! On the other hand, too, there are movements which, because they either overtax one's strength or involve hopelessly awkward positions or are necessarily simple and colorless, can never be graceful, no matter how economically they may be performed. Altogether, it seems better to discard the notion of economy as an unsatisfactory criterion of grace.

But if we say that grace is merely good movement-composition—a distribution of movement throughout the body according to the laws which govern composition in shapes, objects, and other elements of form—we shall acquire not only a more usable standard of measurement but one that brings us somewhat nearer the truth.

The things that destroy grace—a limb that is omitted entirely from a movement, or hangs limp and inert, or works at cross purposes to its fellows, or moves much more violently than any of the rest—are all serious faults in any type of movement-composition; and I can think of no other such fault which is not equally destructive. Not all good movement-composition, of course, results in grace; it is produced, like the work of the tonalists in color, by a special type of composition in which strong contrasts are avoided and harmonies and modulations are multiplied. In a graceful action movement seems to flow outward from the principal centers involved, like ripples from a stone dropped in a pool, until it has reached every muscle in the body and roused it to smooth, easy action. Grace is a perfect coöperation between all the muscles that are essential to an action, plus a sympathetic ac-

companiment by all the others. Not only the movements themselves but the tensions which sustain them are beautifully harmonized and balanced, and every muscle is kept under perfect but unobtrusive control.

As a matter of fact, actual movement can often be dispensed with. If any posture gives us the impression that it was reached by graceful movement, or that the movement by which it dissolves into another will inevitably be graceful, it will seem almost as graceful as movement itself. To speak of the grace of a tree or an arch is not merely a figure of speech; potential grace is as genuine, if not always as vivid, as the kinetic variety. Correggio's Danaë and his Antiope are exceedingly graceful even though they are nearly motionless; and Botticelli's Venus, resting lightly in her shell as the winds waft her toward shore, displays quite as much grace as Guido's swiftly-stooping Atalanta. It is especially difficult to explain this motionless grace by Spencer's formula.

In painting, grace, like movement, can be intensified by various accessory devices. Botticelli's long, unbroken lines (Pl. 23) serve as harmonizers for the movements they depict; the floods of light which Guido (Pl. 71) poured over his moving figures dissolve various little obstacles which might have interrupted that feeling of smoothness and ease on which grace is so greatly dependent; and the very dark backgrounds against which Van der Werff displays his dancing nymphs increase the unity and compactness of their figures.

But if grace can be intensified by its accessories it can also be diminished. Most of the compositional errors by which this can be achieved may be found in the work of Signorelli (Pls. 11, 13); and the only one of importance that is missing there, namely foreshortening, may be studied as thoroughly as anyone may desire in Tintoretto. When parts of various limbs are concealed in this way it seems to be almost impossible to suggest that even distribution of movement throughout the

body which we have found to be the necessary condition for the perception of grace.

The grace which we have been describing thus far is wholly a grace of the body, which may be exhibited by animals as well as by human beings. Domenichino depicted it almost flawlessly in both; his human beings, in particular, are as naïve and playful as kittens, with no trace of those repressions, restraints, and complexes which are the greatest enemies of grace among self-conscious beings. Yet when grace can be spiced successfully with self-consciousness it appeals more strongly to our sophisticated taste than grace that is wholly naïve. A person who is conscious that he is being graceful will be able to refine his movements and ornament them and purify them from ungraceful elements; he is not merely a creature of instinct, but the leader of a finely balanced orchestra of muscles, who is conducting beautifully and serenely. We enjoy his grace through his consciousness as well as through our own. It is perhaps because this element of self-consciousness is so important that we tire so quickly of Guido's grace, even though his figures, considered merely as flesh, are among the most graceful in all painting; and, on the other hand, find so much grace in Jan Steen, in spite of his carelessness with regard to its external aspect.

Yet the grace which I should, at the present moment, rank above all others, namely Sodoma's, is wholly unconscious and naïve. But it is far from being simple, or obvious. It is as easy and languorous as the grace of a python; it is charged with an exotic physical fragrance, as heavy and sweet as the scent of orange-blossoms; it seems always to be dying away toward a state of rest, it is always waning and never waxing; and to anyone who gives himself up to its spell it is a powerful opiate. Perhaps all of these qualities together are able to outweigh the special advantages of self-consciousness.

And self-consciousness, at best, is a dangerous ingredient to

use in grace. If it gets out of hand it may destroy every possibility of grace, as it does in a half-grown boy, or transform it into a caricature of itself,—as it so often did among the Florentines of the late quattrocento, who crooked every elbow, bent every finger archly, and turned and twisted every neck, sparing neither old men nor babes, till they had managed to convert most of their finest movement to affectation. Oftenest, perhaps, self-consciousness tempts a naturally graceful being to hold some charming pose too long, so that it grows dry and affected. Correggio avoided this danger as a skater glides over thin ice; but Greuze often broke through and Caroto met his artistic death there.

Yet grace, even at its best, should not engage our attention too deeply, for it is apparently another of those highly specialized forms of art which the greater painters are inclined to leave to the lesser ones. Rembrandt, Velasquez, and Vermeer, for instance, have hardly left us a strikingly graceful figure between them, and neither Titian, Giorgione, nor Michelangelo is particularly notable for grace. And, on the other hand, third-rate artists like Adraien van der Werff, and even fifth-raters like Hendrik van Limborcht, are able to turn out by the hundred figures whose grace could hardly be surpassed.

I should be inclined to rank higher a certain musical quality in movement, which is also a product of composition. We find it in Delacroix's *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel,* in which the figures seem to be keeping time to some unheard melody, so that they suggest a compelling dance rather than an ordinary wrestling match; and in all of Poussin, though his music is lighter, and played on violins instead of clarinets. In Franz Stuck the rhythms are derived from storms and battles and great passions rather than from music, but they are so powerful that we instinctively place them in the same class.

CHAPTER XIV

DECORATIVE PAINTING

THE CANON OF MURAL PAINTING

Of all the rules that critics have laid down concerning the enjoyment of pictures those which belong to the canon of mural painting are probably the least popular. When they are brought to the layman's attention, with their apparent implication that most of his natural preferences in such matters are wrong and need a thorough revision, they seem so insignificant beside the emotional intensity of his natural tastes that he is inclined to laugh, or perhaps to rage, at them as an absurd bit of pedantry, and to think less than ever of the critics for trying to impose them on him.

The fault does not lie in the rules but in the moral implication which has become attached to them. There is really no excuse for regarding them as a table of æsthetic commandments, for it is not the business of either the critic or the æsthetician to say what a man ought to like, that function belonging exclusively to moralists and pedagogues; and as soon as we begin to employ them merely as scientific formulas for predicting the differentiations in taste which are sure to appear, sooner or later, in any sensitive, thoughtful mind in response to the many special conditions, unknown in easel-painting, which influence decorative painting on walls, every objection to them disappears and we can use them dispassionately to reveal the true æsthetic nature of the pictures we are studying.

Writers on painting who have had occasion to refer to this group of æsthetic principles have usually dismissed the subject after citing only a few of them, with the result that their readers, scenting some serious lack of balance, have been

inclined to reject the whole thing as very questionable. This lack of balance, which is very real, is also unfortunate from the point of view of utility, for in a subject as complex and as full of compromises as this it is almost safer to know none of the guiding principles than to be put in possession of only a few. In a single chapter I cannot hope to expound the complete canon, but I shall try to offer a well-rounded sketch of it which will not seriously mislead anyone who tries to apply it to the decorations he encounters.

THE ABSENCE OF A FRAME

The most important difference between a mural painting and an easel picture, the one which contributes more than any other to its distinctive æsthetic atmosphere, is the absence of a formal frame. A true decoration is not separated from its wall but forms an integral part of it—and the fact that it is painted either on the wall itself or on a canvas which is cemented to the wall makes the union between them all the closer. Decorations, too, average so much larger than easel pictures that it is usually easier to think of them as actually part of the wall on which they hang than as things hung in front of it.

When we see a picture as an integral part of a wall we shall naturally expect it to exhibit not merely the qualities which belong to pictures in general but a few, at least, of those that belong to walls. If it is treated as an absolutely independent work of art it will not altogether please us; we instinctively demand some evidence of its architectural vassalage; we want the wall to show through the paint.

THE QUALITIES OF WALLS: (A) FLATNESS

The quality of walls of which we have heard most in connection with mural painting is flatness. In fact, so much has

been said about it that many of us have come to believe, theoretically at least, that in a decorative painting all the figures ought to be reduced to the thickness of cardboard and every illusion of space behind them abolished. This, of course, is a gross exaggeration. Flatness is undeniably one of the most noticeable and most characteristic of the qualities of walls, and every concession to it in the way of lowering the relief of the figures and lessening the depth of the space behind them will, within certain limits, increase the appropriateness of a decoration and enhance its charm. A Puvis de Chavannes (Pl. 20), which is sure to be beautifully flattened, hangs on its wall as lightly and gracefully as a cobweb, while the solider, more fully rounded forms of an Abbey or a J. P. Laurens have an uneasy air of being a little out of place. This truth is sometimes expressed by saying that a mural painting ought to decorate its surface, and not destroy it with illusions of solidity and depth.

Yet most of the great decorators have been satisfied with very moderate concessions to flatness, and have felt no urge to sacrifice to it everything in the picture. Raphael's *Disputà* and *School of Athens*, for example, are universally accepted as good decorations, but are nevertheless magnificently spacious. Perugino's *Christ Delivering the Keys to Peter* is undoubtedly the most decorative of the side-panels in the Sistine Chapel, yet it is at the same time the one that creates the most powerful illusion of space. Giotto, who has been more highly praised for flatness than anyone else before Puvis, has been praised with equal enthusiasm for the solidity and the rotundity of his figures (Pl. 1)! And Puvis himself often put, quite unobtrusively, more of the third dimension into his compositions than any of his supposedly more realistic rivals!

The general practice among decorators has been to pay tribute to flatness with some instinctive, half-conventional gesture and then proceed with the creation of other qualities that

seemed more important. Piero della Francesca (Pl. 58) merely flattened a little all the solid figures in the foreground, as if he were modeling in low relief, and then set behind them as glorious an expanse of landscape as he could master. Perugino did not flatten much, but preserved the plane of his wall in a sort of Gothic tracery of human figures, through which one looks, as if through the mullions of a window, into the infinite vista beyond. John La Farge adopted the same device in his great altar-piece in the Church of the Ascension in New York. In Andrea's *Nativity of Mary,* in the Annunziata at Florence, the floor, the ceiling, and the side walls of his painted room are all carried up very carefully to connect with the wall which he is decorating, so that we see, at worst, only a recess in its surface. In the paintings which Delacroix made for St. Sulpice he neglected this precaution, with the result that on at least one side of each panel our eyes, instead of being brought up easily to the plane of the wall, are led out somewhere behind it along the background of the painted scene; and such a combination is æsthetically disturbing.

And to these facts we may add the further one that not all the flatness which we do find in a decoration can be credited to the flatness of the wall, for there are several other factors in the situation which tend to produce the same result.

(B) PERMANENCE

There is a second quality of walls about which less has been said but which deserves, I believe, even greater consideration from the decorator. I refer to their permanence. A canvas is light and portable, and when one tires of it it may be put away in the attic, but a wall is likely to stay where it is for a hundred years or more. A frothy, sentimental, or affected picture which might not trouble one particularly if painted on

the flimsier material would be extremely offensive if painted on stone; the very thought that it would have to stay there for a century or two would make it unendurable.

The substance of which a wall is made also influences both the subjects and the treatment of the decorations which are to form a part of it, just as the native qualities of bronze and marble influence the character of the statues that are made from them. Lightness, playfulness, and humor are not absolutely barred, but the massiveness and solidity of stone and concrete favor something more serious and dignified. It is in part because allegories assay higher in these particular qualities than most other subjects that they are so likely to be chosen for mural work. Yet dignity of subject is worth comparatively little unless it is clothed in dignified form and dignified color, such as we find in Puvis and in Piero della Francesca. And good form and color alone can exalt the humblest subject; in Brangwyn (Pl. 21), for example, they raise mere manual labor to an august splendor which has seldom been equaled in the whole range of decorative painting.

(c) SIMPLICITY

Next in importance to the permanence of walls comes the nature of their surface, and in most walls that come under the decorator's hand the outstanding qualities of the surface may be summed up in the word simplicity. The decorator himself might speak of the monotony of a wall and say that that was precisely the quality he had been called in to relieve, but if he knew his business he would be very careful not to destroy that same monotony completely but only to develop it and bring it to bloom in forms which we might describe as simple and homogeneous. His picture would not differ widely from the rest of the wall either in tone or in color; its accents would never be allowed to grow too sharp; and neither its colors nor

its lines would develop tensions strong enough to disrupt the general smoothness of the wall.

Puvis, Giotto, and Angelico—at least in his frescoes in San Marco—came very close to this ideal. The use of fresco gives any painter a long start in this direction, because its colors actually sink into the plaster of the wall and become a part of it, taking on in the process many of its qualities. Puvis de Chavannes is one of the few painters who have been able to rival its effects with oil and canvas. His color-tones seem no more foreign to the wall than the variations of light that play over it; the contours which he draws on it seem hardly more than ripples in its surface; and his designs as a whole are as restful to the eye as the texture of the stone itself. Blake, one feels (Pl. 70), might have accomplished almost as much; but the eighteenth century cared little for mural painting and he was never given an opportunity.

ARCHITECTURAL STRESSES

A few walls, however, instead of being flat and homogeneous are crossed by panels, pilasters, cornices, or moldings, which either create architectural stresses themselves in the surface of the wall or carry across it the powerful thrusts of some dome or vaulted ceiling above. In either case, flatness, dignity, and simplicity are no longer enough; a decoration for such a wall must either develop within itself forces capable of resisting the architectural forces by which it is surrounded or be crushed into ineffectuality. This was where Puvis's decorative formula broke down. In the Pantheon, and in most other French buildings in which he worked, these external forces were so weak that they could safely be ignored; but in the monumental staircase of the Boston Public Library the clash of colors and of masses is tremendous and the weak forms and hues which he had evolved to fit another environment can

hardly withstand the pressure. The great panel of the Muses at the head of the stairs is more successful because it is set in a recess and among much simpler walls.

Burne-Jones was similarly handicapped, but either chance or wise foresight turned his attention to textiles and to glass, in which it is never necessary to develop such powerful forces, and to Gothic buildings, in which his delicate sheafs of parallel lines could always join forces with the prevailing stresses of the architecture instead of being obliged to resist them.

Cimabue on the other hand (Pl. 45), was able to create lines and masses powerful enough to resist any imaginable stresses,—and did. Piero della Francesca retained this nucleus of line and mass and added to it strength of color, the immense physical strength of his figures, and the strength of personality that lies behind it; his men and women are veritable caryatids in paint. He is the most thoroughly architectural of painters, and this alone ensures him a place among the greatest of decorators.

Michelangelo was in the habit of creating figures of tremendous power which would have been as much too strong for the very simple architecture of the Sistine ceiling as Puvis's were too weak for the Boston Library, and not being willing, or able, to tone them down he resorted to the other alternative and painted in enough sturdy architectural elements to justify them. The absence of any such architectural relief in the *Last Judgment* is one of the reasons for its failure as a decoration.

CEILINGS AND DOMES

Ceilings constitute a special problem for the decorator because the æsthetic development of the last century or two has taught us to demand that they be kept extremely light. If he covers them with heavy colors and plump figures everyone who

is obliged to live beneath his compositions will be vaguely uncomfortable.

In sixteenth century Venice conditions were different. Ceilings then were such heavily coffered affairs that Tintoretto, Veronese, and the rest could paint as heavily for them as they did for decorations to be placed on the walls beneath them, and in fact were obliged to paint heavily to match the richness of the architectural detail. But by the time Tiepolo (Pl. 56) appeared on the scene, a century later, the structure of ceilings had grown so much simpler and lighter that he could feel free, after making a few concessions to the riotous exuberance of the baroque walls beneath, to spin for them designs as spacious, as light, and as airy as a summer sky,—in which the few baroque touches seem no more obtrusive than a line of distant thunderheads on the horizon. He neglected no imaginable device for increasing the buoyancy of his figures. To as many as possible he gave wings; in the others, he either let the robe swell out until it suggested a balloon, or wound it around the waist like a life-preserver, or flattened it into a plane on which the wearer might be imagined to glide through the air. He manipulated his modeling and his light so as to suggest a minimum of weight in his figures, and set them all flashing across the sky with dazzling rapidity. And the space which is their playground he made light and vast and strangely exhilarating. Since his day the tendency toward lightness of handling has become more firmly established, but few of his successors have been able to surpass the brilliancy of his designs.

Domes, of course, are only a special form of ceiling; but their peculiar shape offers to the decorator unusual opportunities for brilliant effects,—of which Correggio was apparently the first to take advantage. The astounding vortex of arms and legs and clouds into which one gazes from the floor of the Cathedral at Parma is unimaginable as a decoration for any other surface, and even here is somewhat confusing and

irritating, yet because it is at the same time so daring and so peculiarly appropriate a solution of the difficult problem offered by the dome it wins our enthusiastic approval in spite of its defects.

DECORATIONS AS ARCHITECTURE

Since a decoration is an æsthetic hybrid, part painting and part architecture, we ought not to be surprised at discovering in it many of the qualities of its sterner parent, however foreign that may seem to the natural genius of painting. Impersonality, for example, is rare in easel-painting but almost universal in architecture,—and we find the decorator again and again repressing his own personality and conventionalizing and formalizing the personalities of his painted figures. Architecture, again, speaks almost entirely through abstract forms and very little through meanings; and the decorator accordingly renounces much of that language of meanings which is his natural heritage as a painter and says what he has to say through shapes and colors. The strong drift in this direction which we observe in Giotto, Pintoricchio, Piero della Francesca, Brangwyn, and Henri Martin accounts for not a little of their success; and the lack of it in Filippo Lippi, Correggio, Rubens, and Boucher explains many of their failures.

Again, painting in its natural state usually avoids any excess of vertical and horizontal lines, but when it comes under the influence of architecture it seeks every excuse for introducing and emphasizing them. This is the source of much of that architectural quality which is so noticeable in Cimabue, Piero, Puvis, and Burne-Jones. Architecture, too, encourages a much more formal division of space than we ordinarily find in painting; compare, for example, the decorative compositions of Perugino, Raphael, and Michelangelo, and Pintoricchio's wonderful ceiling in the choir of Santa Maria del Popolo, with

the subtleties of Botticelli's *Magnificat* (Pl. 44) or Rembrandt's *Resurrection* (Pl. 15).

THE HUMAN FACTOR

The easel-painter paints, we may say, as if his pictures were to be viewed by an ideal public in an ideal gallery; but the decorator must consider very carefully what sort of people will actually visit the room in which his pictures are to be placed and under what conditions they will have to view them.

He must, for example, adapt his treatment to the illumination of his room. In the comparative darkness of the delivery room in the Boston Library Abbey's great pools of gold, white, and crimson afford a welcome relief from the prevailing obscurity,—while in the sunlit courtyard of the Annunziata tones any brighter than those in Andrea's frescoes would be almost painful to one's eyes.

The size of the room, or the distance from which the paintings in it will ordinarily be viewed, is an important factor. If this distance is to be great, the figures in the panel should be comparatively simple, and the relations between them so clearly defined that the spectator can grasp them immediately without having to strain his eyes or puzzle his brain. Giotto (Pl. 1) was a paragon of clarity. Puvis de Chavannes evolved more complex designs, but gave them a framework of simplicity by dividing them clearly into separate zones, devoted to earth, water, sky, trees, and living figures. Brangwyn is less careful with his forms, but orders his colors so finely that one can be thoroughly content with these alone until one has a chance to move closer and decipher their meanings.

But if the room is small, or if the public is more likely to view the pictures at close range than from a distance, a very simple composition is apt to grow tiresome and some more intricate pattern is indicated. Botticelli's *Spring* and *Birth of*

Venus do not immediately suggest decoration when one sees them across a large gallery, but for a hallway or a small room they are ideal entertainments for the eye. The great compositions in Raphael's Stanze, on the contrary, would be more effective in a much larger room. In every one the decorative focus is so long that one has to step into the next room to see it at its best. In the Pantheon, both J. P. Laurens and Puvis de Chavannes, either misjudging the normal habits of the sightseeing public or failing to allow for the influence of the floor-plan in this particular building, painted with a very long decorative focus—but a large majority of the visitors to the place blandly insists on viewing their works from an average distance of three feet.

The height above the eye at which a picture is to hang, and any curvature in its surface, call for elaborate readjustments in perspective and foreshortening,—which are much too technical to enter into here.

People who go to church will need one type of decoration and people who go to the theater another,—but in neither case can the decorator count on the sustained and concentrated attention which the easel-painter expects as a matter of course. The people who come into the presence of his pictures will, for the most part, be busy with something else, so that they can spare them only an occasional idle glance. After they have hung there a hundred years—or perhaps sooner—this situation may be reversed; but in the meantime the decorator will be performing his true function better if he paints something which can be enjoyed with half an eye. If he can blend with this agreeable entertainment something profound or subtle or inspiring, so much the better; but his primary function in the world is not to elevate the public taste or the public morals but to fill pleasantly a few of its spare moments. He cannot create as freely as a pure artist does, but must always re-

member that he is part architect, part craftsman, and part mere entertainer.

The greatest exception to these principles that I can call to mind is Sargent's series of complex, highly symbolical panels in the top floor of the Boston Library—and here the human conditions to be met are very unusual. The people who pass through this hall are, with few exceptions, either habitués of the special libraries to which it leads—who come day after day and have not only considerable leisure but a scholarly turn of mind which enables them to find pleasure in puzzling out an elaborately symbolical composition—or lovers of art who come especially to study the pictures and are prepared to give them as much attention as they would if they were hung in a museum. Sargent, as a painter already very famous, was entitled to count on this group as well as on the other. But such cases are rare in the history of decoration.

When a decoration is to be made for some domestic room in which a few people will probably spend a great deal of time the painter may again count on a more sustained attention, but another set of demands also makes its appearance. If he is to use figures he will be expected to provide beings that can be lived with comfortably day after day and year after year; he must express to the utmost whatever social gifts he may himself possess. No one has yet mastered the intricate requirements of this branch of the art more thoroughly than Pintoricchio (Pl. 19). As public decorators, Giotto, Michelangelo, Piero, and Brangwyn may all be greater, but who would care to live for even a month in a room completely covered with their figures? Pintoricchio, however, had a knack of creating personalities with whom one can live indefinitely in this semi-intimate fashion. They are friendly, they radiate good nature, and, in an easy-going fashion of their own, they are interesting; yet they never intrude on one's thoughts when they

are not wanted, remaining always at a social distance which keeps them from becoming irritating or tiresome and preserves their native charm intact. They perform the difficult duties of professional guests with poise and grace. Pintoricchio himself, of course, keeps as discreetly in the background as the master of a pageant, merely keeping a watchful eye on his figures to make sure that they never lapse from being colorful, decorative, and modestly entertaining.

Such restfulness in a decoration is almost as valuable in a large public room as in a small private room; it is nearly always more desirable than something stimulating and exciting. Every panel needs to have places where one's eye can pause comfortably, just as a park needs benches. The restful figures should be reënforced by soft, harmonious color and smoothly flowing lines. Raphael's decorations are nearly always soothing; Piero's, though somewhat harsher, are full of a passive strength which tones down their rougher aspects; Perugino's have the charm of pleasant dreams; and Puvis's radiate a calm serenity.

Flatness of treatment is valuable here because it obviates the constant readjustment of focus which is required by a picture that varies greatly in depth and in relief, and facilitates a free, easy movement of the eyes. A certain smoothness of surface, such as we find in Andrea and in Puvis, contributes to the same end; but good composition is probably worth more, from this point of view, than either flatness or smoothness. It was an almost miraculous command over composition which enabled Puvis to handle the great panel in the lecture hall of the Sorbonne, *The Sacred Wood,* as a single picture. Any less skilful decorator would have thought it impossible to keep the spectator's eye moving easily and smoothly over a space that was at the same time so very long and so very narrow, and would have broken it up into half a dozen smaller panels; but Puvis chose to handle it as a single composition, and did it

so brilliantly that one's eye sweeps back and forth across it with the ease of a pendulum and hardly notices the length of the journey. He used no less skill in his smaller decorations, but as that problem has been solved oftener, in at least adequate fashion, his results are not quite so striking.

THE DECORATIVE SPIRIT

These various principles, taken together, constitute the canon of mural decoration. They are contradictory and full of exceptions—the painter must decide for himself in each particular case which of them to follow and which to ignore, or whether to throw them over altogether. They might be compared to the force of gravitation which, at any given point, exercised a constant pull in a constant direction, but which may be temporarily resisted or overcome by a variety of devices.

One of these devices is a display of the decorative spirit. If the painter can convince us in any way, however informal or unconventional, that his chief intent in covering a surface with paint is to decorate it, we, being human and not automatons, are usually willing to let him take as many liberties as he pleases with the formal rules. They are lifeless things at best until the spirit of some great decorator has incarnated itself in them—most of the praise which has been showered on Puvis de Chavannes for conformity to them could be transferred without changing a word to the pale, fossilized creations of Signol in St. Sulpice—and when we have to choose between a great decorator who neglects the canon and a smaller man who is willing to conform to it we take the decorator every time.

Benozzo Gozzoli (Pl. 22) was ignorant of, or insensitive to, dozens of decorative niceties which are as commonplace as table-manners to modern mural painters; yet because he was so obviously filled with delight at having such vast surfaces to decorate, and threw his towering metropolises, his lance-like

trees, and his endless pageants across them with a gusto and an abandon which were unknown to the easel-painting of his day, we value him more than a hundred conventional mediocrities who, if judged on points alone, would always have to be awarded a decision over him.

In Robert Chanler (Pl. 24) we find the decorative spirit equipped with vastly more knowledge, but it is no less bold, restless, experimental, and inventive, and no less deeply absorbed in its task. His panels are endlessly varied and interesting,—intellectual playgrounds in which one can find inexhaustible diversions. Their nearest ancestors are the arabesques with which Raphael, Sodoma, and Signorelli surrounded the pictorial panels in their decorations; but they have evolved from them as far as man has from the monkey! They are not merely fantastic inventions, but glimpses into a new, exotic sort of world which is filled with odd and entertaining adventures for the mind—and to provide such escapes and diversions is probably the highest function that decoration can perform in age which is as excessively practical and matter-of-fact as the present.

It would be misleading to cite Frank Brangwyn (Pl. 21) as a painter whose violations of the decorative code were justified by the spirit in which they were performed, for there are few living decorators who are more thoroughly master of all the technicalities of their profession; yet it would be equally misleading not to mention him among the men in whom the instinct for decoration reaches its height. This instinct is not a thing that can be defined, or even described, but it is as easy to recognize as the difference between the gestures of an actress and the gestures of a dancer. In Brangwyn, in particular, every line, every touch of color, and, especially, the way in which he constantly subordinates meanings to line, to shape, or to color betrays the born decorator. Even his easel-pictures are only decorations in embryo. And this decorative

gift is reënforced by two others, a genius for creating monumental effects and a knack of so generalizing his forms that they seem to stand for far more than their mere individual selves,—which, taken together, have saved him from having to fall back on the hackneyed, conventional symbols which are the principal stock in trade of most decorators. Everything he puts on canvas becomes immediately—and I might say automatically—a symbol of something greater than itself. His buildings are symbols of their century, or of their country; his men, of the whole human race or of the class to which they belong; and any simple act of manual labor calls to mind the whole function of work in human existence. Being thus able to say whatever he wishes to say about things in general between the lines of what he has to say about some one thing in particular, he has—almost alone among decorators—never been obliged to descend into that limbo between the real and the abstract which is known as allegory. It is perhaps as good a proof as can be offered of his supremacy.

ART VERSUS DECORATION

The canon of decoration has another particularly weak point. As decoration is admittedly one of the lesser arts—a hybrid, somewhat artificial and rather difficult to raise—the artist is liable at any moment to abandon it and break out into the greater freedom of pure art. And if he does not, the spectator is liable at any moment to demand that he should. Between them, they create a considerable demand for art in places which, logically, ought to be sacred to decoration.

When a theoretically decorative panel is comparatively small, and set deep in a recess in the wall, I can see no good reason for trying to restrain the artist from treating it, if he is so inclined, as a pure work of art, leaving the critics to explain, if any explanation seems necessary, that it was placed in its niche, instead

of being framed and hung on the wall, merely because some one wished to have it there, either for convenience or for decorative reasons. The visitor to the Boston Library who prefers Abbey's Grail pictures to the allegories of Puvis is not necessarily displaying a reprehensible taste in decoration; he may be merely demonstrating the fact that he finds the art of illustration more interesting than the art of mural painting. The stickler for the conventions may insist that if they are illustrations they ought to be framed and hung on the wall instead of being attached to it in a manner that might deceive the unwary into mistaking them for pure decoration, but this hardly seems a sufficient reason for depriving any picture of the additional grandeur which it derives from being affixed to a wall, with a number of others, in some formal, decorative arrangement. And I cannot doubt that, on the whole, these pictures are better suited to the place they occupy than anything Puvis could possibly have done in their stead. Decoration is, from one point of view, something to which the artist resorts when he feels that for one reason or another an independent, self-contained work of art would not be properly appreciated.

The trouble is that, in practice, the paintings which people try to justify under this exception are neither good decoration nor good art but wretched comprises between the two, to which even a moderately good decoration, untainted by any other aspirations, is infinitely preferable.

CHAPTER XV

ABSOLUTE PAINTING

FORM VERSUS MEANING

There are a number of forces at work in art which if allowed to work without checks or balances would ultimately banish meaning from it altogether, leaving nothing but pure form.

Every sensitive artist tries to reveal in his pictures the distinctive qualities of the medium in which he is working. Every brush stroke of Titian's has a rich oiliness which is totally lacking in the thin, characterless structures of Dou and Gérôme. Titian never went beyond this simple accentuation of the quality of his paint; but Mancini, being less perfectly balanced, was capable of producing canvases which looked like a mosaic of scrapings from a dry palette, and some of Sargent's water-colors are so extremely expressive of the medium that one wonders whether he was really trying to paint a picture or was merely experimenting with his medium.

An excessive interest in methods of rendering made many passages in Fragonard's brushwork almost illegible and led Signac into his extreme type of *pointillisme*. Botticelli often became so deeply absorbed in the beauty of line that he neglected its meanings; and few true artists, from Bouts to Burne-Jones, have ever hesitated to sacrifice any detail of representative truth which seemed to interfere with the expression of a mood or an emotion. There has never been a dearth of forces capable of eventuating in an absolute art but they have not been strong enough to do it unaided.

But in the last half-century or so they have been reënforced

by a constant succession of new forces, peculiar to the present age, and the always latent tendency toward the painting of pure form finally burst into full bloom. The photographic realism of Meissonier and the sentimental story-telling of Millais and Defregger, which had exalted meaning at the expense of form, aroused a reaction which inevitably exalted form at the expense of meaning. The rise of photography itself impelled every intelligent painter toward a type of art in which he would not be expected to compete with its minute but mechanical realism. The proclamations of Whistler, the rediscovery by Puvis de Chavannes of the art of mural painting, the growing appreciation of Japanese prints and, later, of the art of primitive peoples all aroused a new interest in the almost forgotten art of creating forms with a beauty of their own, wholly independent of their meanings. Cézanne, although he seems to have been by intention only a more profound realist than any of his predecessors, became, by a queer twist of fate, a sort of springboard at the very end of the realistic movement from which each of his successors took the leap into the sea of pure form below.

Yet I doubt whether even the advent of Cézanne would have produced an absolute art of such magnitude and such rigorous purity if his influence had not been supplemented by that of many writers on art,—historians, critics, and æstheticians. The historians began to note that many primitives whose forms were absurd when regarded as representations of nature had nevertheless a strange power over people's emotions, which could not possibly be attributed to their meanings. The æstheticians began to discover that the secondary, or non-representative, meanings of form played a more vital part in art than the primary meanings, and that what later came to be known as "significant form" was the one element common to all works of art—and, with their usual fanaticism, jumped to the conclusion that form, in the purest sense of the word, was the

sole source of æsthetic vitality. The critics of the post-Ruskinian period, reacting slowly from the spell of the great moralist, fell into the habit of disregarding or even despising meanings and of looking even at saints and madonnas as if they were only patterns in line and color. And when they sought reasons for the rapid rise of music to a place of great power and dignity among the arts they found them in its complete freedom from representative meanings. Practitioners of other arts envied the musician this freedom, and when Pater proclaimed that "all art constantly aspires toward the condition of music," this dictum was seized on with avidity, and was soon stretched to a wider and more absolute meaning than he seems to have intended to give it.

For a time, the efforts of progressive painters to reduce the average content of representative meaning in their work yielded nothing but good; but when the pioneers of the movement began to assume that its ultimate goal was the complete "purification" of painting from meaning, and that this was the objective toward which painting had been moving throughout its history, the situation became very serious. For the moment, the battle seems to be over, with meaning firmly reëstablished as one of the most important ingredients in painting, but it has raised so many questions that throw light on other vital problems in the art that it can hardly be a waste of time to run over the principal points at issue.

MUSIC AND PAINTING

The statement that "all art constantly aspires to the condition of music" is, in the light of modern æsthetics, a mere absurdity. No art, except as a very temporary aberration from its true course, aspires toward anything but a higher realization of its own peculiar possibilities. And this goal can never be reached by means of a slavish imitation of some other art.

The development of any art is determined largely by the nature of the materials in which it is embodied. Now sound is very well adapted to become the medium of an absolute art, but color is not. Color can neither grip one's attention as firmly nor stir one's emotions as powerfully as sound. A sunset can often be overlooked, but a thunderstorm never fails to make itself heard. And the painter cannot use color at its best, but only in its lower intensities and in comparatively small quantities: there is nothing in painting comparable to fortissimo passages on an organ or an orchestra. In music, too, one sound swells up, dies away, and gives place to another, creating an illusion of life and motion, but the patches of color in a painting are fixed and static.

Color lacks the structural qualities of sound, as sand lacks the structural qualities of bricks. The notes of the musical scale fit together as perfectly as a well-designed set of children's building-blocks, but the relations between the various tones of the color-scale are much looser and vaguer and less obvious, even when the painter limits himself to a comparatively small number of tones. The musician can control the order in which his notes will reach the hearer's ear, while the colorist can only spread a number of harmonious tones on his canvas and trust that the spectator will ultimately discover the most agreeable combinations that can be made with them; this is probably the greatest of all the structural differences between the two mediums. Structures of pure color may serve all the purposes of a minor, dependent art such as decoration—especially since it can be supported here by a more formal set of shapes than can be used in ordinary painting—but when it is used as a medium for an independent art of pure form it is found to lack body. It cannot stand alone; something must be added to it which has more power to grip and hold. In the Clavilux and other color organs it is motion, and the greater

intensity of transmitted light; in ordinary painting, representative meanings.

It is notable, too, that even in a medium as ideally fitted as sound to support an absolute art several strongly representative arts have arisen in addition to the art of pure form,—poetry, the art of the theater, and the art of the story teller. As far as I am aware, no one has even suggested that any of these arts ought to be abolished to make room for music—and I venture to predict that as long as they are able to hold their place in the world representative painting will not be obliged to abdicate either, in favor of its youngest and most erratic offspring.

PLEASURE IN ABSOLUTE FORM

When advocates of absolute painting declare that only in forms that are free from meanings can æsthetic pleasure reach its maximum of purity and intensity they have to be taken somewhat more seriously. Of course this is most often said by sentimentalists who have been deluded by their great admiration for the word purity into believing that anything simple is necessarily better than everything that is complex,—and who would probably declare, without investigation or reflection, that pure oxygen was better to breathe than air and distilled water better to drink than water from a spring. And nearly on a par with them are those æstheticians who hold that because significant form is the only element common to all works of art it contains everything that is vital to art, and that therefore everything else is superfluous and should be lopped off,—which is like arguing that since wings do not happen to be found in all known forms of life, birds and bats and insects would be much better off without them! Æsthetic problems cannot be settled in this mechanical, *a priori* fashion, but only

by careful and accurate analyses of the operations of the human mind.

But when a number of intelligent, sensitive persons report that the pleasure which they derive from pure forms in painting is finer, deeper, and in every way more desirable than their pleasure in representative forms, their testimony has to be weighed very carefully. I should not necessarily believe them, however great their numbers or however high their authority, for what we are considering for the moment is the course of art appreciation over a very long period of years, and here our general knowledge of the workings of the human mind is a better guide than the experience of any one generation in a field as full of illusions as that of art. (The oft-repeated statement that the laws of æsthetics can be deduced only from the works of art which happen to be in existence is, as a matter of fact, merely a confession of ignorance: a visitor from another planet who had somehow acquired an otherwise perfect knowledge of human psychology could predict both the nature of art and the laws that guide it without having seen a picture or heard a symphony.)

It would be futile to deny that there are some persons who enjoy absolute art more keenly than representative art, just as there are others who enjoy etchings or drawings or block-prints more than painting. But we are not obliged to accept their prediction that the minor art which they happen to enjoy so greatly will become the major art of the future. We can even admit that absolute forms do yield a greater pleasure without being obliged to go as far as that. There is a parallel situation in literature. Poems yield a purer and more intense æsthetic pleasure than novels, and the two forms have been in competition for several hundred years, yet novels are to-day more firmly intrenched in our affections than ever and are more likely to drive out poetry than to be driven out by it. The purity and intensity of æsthetic pleasure is only a part of the

story; meanings may dilute and adulterate it, but how they spice it, and enrich it, and spread it out, and make it memorable!

And I am not sure that we need even accept the absolutists' claim for greater intensity. Representative painting derives a tremendous power from the fact that its forms all fall in groups with which we have been familiar from childhood, and around which all our emotions have been twined. A slight deviation of a line in some familiar form, although it may be as invisible in itself as the shifting of the facial muscles which changes an expression of welcome to one of cold hostility, may say volumes to us in meanings and emotions. An art which contains such elements is vastly richer than one which does not, as a language built up with the aid of many prefixes and suffixes is richer than one that contains only simple root-words. In an art of forms that are wholly unfamiliar and meaningless such deviations and undulations, have comparatively little significance; transfer them to some well-known form and it is like magnifying them a thousandfold in a microscope. Similarly, even a fragment of meaning—no more than one finds in a good Matisse—will bring out, like a pinch of salt thrown on a steak or a dish of vegetables, some hidden flavor in a form which could never have been detected without its aid. These are handicaps which an art of absolute forms will find it very difficult to overcome.

It is true that as one's familiarity with art increases meanings drop gradually out of consciousness, until it becomes possible to look at a picture for an hour or so with deep enjoyment and yet leave it with only a vague idea of what story it is supposed to tell or what, precisely, it is supposed to represent; but I am sure that even in this advanced stage of appreciation meanings still play an exceedingly important part in the process, even though their activity has been relegated to subconscious channels, and that if they had been absent our hour of enjoyment

would have been reduced to ten minutes, or more probably to five.

THE FUTURE OF ABSOLUTE PAINTING

For a generation or two absolute painting will still possess some measure of novelty, and that one advantage may suffice to make it, as long as the novelty endures, the most vital branch of painting; and after that it may still persist, either as a minor art or as an importation into the major art of representative painting, in the form, perhaps, of Absolutist paintings hung on the walls of some painted interior, comparable to the introduction of songs into plays; but it is unimaginable that it should either destroy representative painting altogether as a living art or capture its place at the head of the family of graphic arts. Absolute art is merely one more of the many ascetic forms—or perhaps I should say, in view of its tendency to meddle with other sorts of art, one of the Puritanical forms—which have separated themselves from the main current of painting by renouncing some of the many elements which it contains; and it has no more claim to first place than etching or lithography. The absolute painter, like the conservative poet, must always cramp his picture to make it fit a predetermined formula, instead of letting it expand naturally and create its own form, in the complex image of life itself. Absolutism may offer enough interesting possibilities to fill the life of a minor painter; but to suppose that a major artist, a man seething with thought and feeling and completely master of his medium, would be content to devote his life to it is as absurd as supposing that a great master of orchestral color would be willing to spend his life writing symphonies scored only for trombones, flutes, and drums. When the human race has once evolved a great instrument of expression it does not willingly abandon it.

It seems especially strange in an age in which music is groping everywhere for representative elements with which to enrich itself to hear it seriously proposed that painting should exactly reverse this process and divest itself of the representative power which it has already acquired. It is beginning to be clear that music is absolute not from choice but from necessity,— because the world of sounds is, for the most part, too fragmentary and chaotic to serve as the basis for a representative art.

Painting's next of kin among the arts is not music but literature, and if analogies are to be drawn at all they can be based more profitably on the various arts of words. The resemblances are not so striking, perhaps, but they occur in more vital organs.

The basic fact about both painting and writing is that they have to compete in interest with a well-rounded, highly differentiated, and extremely complex world, by virtue of the fact that they are able to reproduce this world whenever the artist so desires, while music, in which such a reproduction is either impossible or impractical, is left free to pursue its own course.

Literature has seldom aspired toward absolute form. The best-known attempts are the compositions which we describe as nonsense verse,—and they are valued most highly when they either contain a maximum of hidden meaning or imitate most successfully the appearance of meaning, as in "The Owl and the Pussy-cat" and " 'Twas brillig and the slithy toves . . ." The works of Gertrude Stein, which have reached the absolute zero of meaning, are not, I believe, taken seriously as literature even by their greatest admirers; if valued at all, it is as interesting experiments in modern æsthetics. And no one, I think, has yet declared that Keats could have written more beautifully if he had not been hampered by the antiquated notion that his words ought to make sense—or has limited his reading of poetry to languages that he does not understand, so that he

may drink in the pure beauty of sound, rhythm, and meter undisturbed by any literary meanings that may accompany them.

When we approach a specimen of graphic art our expectation of meanings is perhaps somewhat lower than in the case of words, but it is still high enough to prevent us from finding our maximum of pleasure in any form which is wholly devoid of meanings. Mere beauty may occur independently of meaning, but from art we expect something more than beauty; and this something cannot reach its full development without the aid of representative forms. So too with painters: every artist in the future may occasionally have ideas which cannot be properly expressed except in pure form, but I doubt whether they will ever be the greatest things that he has it in him to say.

And as for the contention of the absolutists that meaning is only an intruder in the realm of form which prevents it from attaining its full æsthetic height, which of the absolutists has yet created forms with any greater æsthetic value than those of Giotto, Mantegna, Lotto, Pintoricchio, Titian, Fragonard, Greco, Blake, or Renoir?

Absolute painting, however, has performed two very great services for the art of painting. It has taught many people to see form where they could previously see only meaning, and it has done more to disseminate a knowledge of what art really is than any other movement in the history of painting. In more concrete terms, it has rescued Giotto and the other primitives from the ignominy of being esteemed merely for their historical interest and restored them to their full rank as artists, and it has won for all future artists a greater freedom than other generations of painters have ever possessed. Whatever its future development may be, it will deserve the respect of many generations of men for what it has already achieved.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BLENDING OF FORM AND MEANING

In a representative art it is not enough to build up a beautiful structure of forms and a separate one of meanings, attached together only by the necessary connections between the individual forms and meanings. The artist's task is not complete until he has knit both structures more or less firmly into one.

ACCENT

The simplest device to which he can turn is using each one to accent the other. We have already spoken of the use of meanings to accent elements in the form; it is now time to say a little about the use of form to accent meanings.

In his *Madonna with Saints* (Pl. 50) Mantegna accentuated the principal figure by placing it on the vertical axis of the picture. Greco adopted the same device in his *Resurrection* (Pl. 16) and added still more emphasis by isolating the figure of the rising Christ from all the others. Botticelli in the *Pietà* (Pl. 8) and Carravaggio in the *Entombment* (Pl. 6) marked out one figure from all the others by flooding it with light; and Giotto in his great altar-piece in the Uffizii used the intense blue of the robe for the same purpose. In Tintoretto's *Annunciation* (Pl. 69) the momentum of the train of angels, carried down through the body of the dove to the seated figure of Mary, constitutes the principal accent. A single powerful accent is often enough to make a picture memorable; who can ever forget the lonely figure in white in Tintoretto's *Christ Before Pilate* or the strange, superhuman eyes that blaze out from Piero della Francesca's *Resurrection?* And when accents

are neglected, as in Correggio's *Madonna with St. George* (Pl. 52) and in most of Tiepolo's compositions (Pl. 56), the confusion that results is very disturbing.

But it is the network of minor accents that bind form and meaning together most firmly,—the strong light that falls on face or hands, the contour outlined sharply against a dark background, the particularly careful drawing that makes one line stand out among its sketchier neighbors, or the tension in some one curve that enables it to draw, and hold, more attention than any of the others. Each of these accents becomes a doorway in the wall which normally separates the form-system in the picture from the meaning-system, and when they are numerous and well-integrated this wall is reduced to a mere colonnade, which divides but does not separate. One is always aware that the meaning of the picture depends not merely on the nature of the forms themselves but very much on the way in which they are arranged. Here, forms and meanings do not lie in wholly separate strata but begin, at least, to merge into one.

In a Vermeer (Pl. 79) this network of accents hangs over the scene like a magic veil, making it look extraordinarily natural yet at the same time strangely and unnaturally beautiful. The thing that has happened to it is what happens to some ordinary prosaic phrase such as "Come down to Kew in lilac-time"—prosaic enough if one encounters it for the first time in ordinary speech—when a poet seizes on it and, by inserting it in a poem, imposes on it a rhythmic scheme of accents and qualities designed to develop every possibility of beauty that it contains.

Frans Hals (Pl. 38) was more likely to use accents for their own sake,—they sparkle from his pictures like flecks of sunlight on the wind-roughened surface of a lake—yet he applied them with a sure eye for the importance of every meaning. His judgment as to where to put them and how much

emphasis to use was almost infallible and covered meanings of all varieties and all magnitudes, from a forehead to a rosette in a lace collar. His eyes, from this point of view, are surely the most versatile that any painter has possessed. His pictures have all the virtues that distinguish good dialogue from bad in a play.

Velasquez (Pl. 27), who was probably a greater realist than either Hals or Vermeer, fell back on accent for that unrealistic element which every picture needs. Like a Beethoven expanding a folk-song into a symphony, he transmuted, by its aid, everything that passed through his brain and brush, whether it was duke or dwarf, into something nobler and grander than any other hand could have evolved from the same forms. The method is simple enough, just an emphasizing of the desirable qualities in a face and a hurrying over the others, but it was the method that enabled the Greek sculptors, working from human models, to create marble gods. Velasquez, perhaps, came nearer to their achievements than anyone else who has worked in paint, although he aimed at a less supernatural goal.

In Tintoretto, Goya, Piero della Francesca, and Brangwyn we find accents of a more piercing intensity but they never mastered accent so thoroughly in all of its lesser forms. They could create brilliant details, but their canvases as a whole lack that smooth, rhythmic, opulent flow of accent which characterizes the finest æsthetic organisms in every art.

Dou and Ford Madox Brown crowded more points of interest into their canvases but did not know how to organize them in any adequate rhythmic scheme; their details sprawl around the picture as helplessly as movie-actors in the absence of the director. Manet's pictures fairly clang with accents, but it is on form and space that they fall and not on meanings; in fact, he seems to have considered meanings merely useless encumbrances, and left them in the picture only because he

knew no good way of getting rid of them. Naturally he took no trouble to tie them up with line, color, or any other element of his form.

Zurbaran sometimes accented neatly and beautifully, as in our illustration (Pl. 25), but oftener painted human beings as if they were as dry of meanings as a trapezoid. He brushed in contours with the precision of a Heifetz and burnished all his surfaces to a beautiful glaze which sparkles in one place and is dull in another; but seems, in these particular pictures, as indifferent to human values as his monastic sitters presumably were to the temptations of the world. Crivelli's figures (Pl. 60) are as dry at the core as Zurbaran's, but the enamel of affectation with which he covered them glitters with accents, imparting values to the forms within somewhat as the process of mummification does to an insignificant Pharaoh or a forgotten Peruvian chief.

SIZE AND POSITION

Meanings may also be modified by changing the relative sizes or the relative positions of the forms that carry them, without changing by a hair the shapes or colors of the forms themselves. This too is a species of composition.

In Bocklin's *Rocky Gorge* (Pl. 75) the smallness of the human figures who are fleeing down the path to escape the dragon greatly intensifies the atmosphere of awe and mystery. In Rembrandt's *Angel Leaving Tobias* (Pl. 68), on the other hand, it is the almost oppressive largeness of the receding angel which emphasizes the supernatural and rather terrifying aspects of his visit.

In Ghirlandajo's *Death of St. Francis* (Pl. 2) it is position—the close juxtaposition of the grief-stricken features of the kneeling monk and the lifeless ones of the dead saint—which brings out the meaning; if they had been more widely

separated most of the contrast between them would have been lost. In *The Girl with a Wineglass* (Pl. 79) the crowding of the evil, spider-like man so close to the girl says more than could ever be depicted by gesture and expression alone. In Guido's *Atalanta and Hippomenes* (Pl. 71) the various balances and parallelisms between the different limbs are all designed to emphasize the contrasts between the stooping figure and the running one, and it is done so expertly that if the two figures were to change places the whole effect would be ruined.

Giotto's *St. Francis* (Pl. 1) is a masterpiece in the use of position as an aid to expression, and is full of examples both obvious and subtle. For a specimen of the first sort note his division of the attendant monks into four distinct groups, two of ritualists and two of mourners, and contrast it with the way in which Ghirlandajo blurs them all together. And for a less obvious effect study the four mourners who are standing together behind the bed. Cover up either of the two uplifted hands or either of the two heads at the right, imagine either of the two tallest heads lowered by so little as half their length or the whole group shifted as slight a distance to right or left, or try to add a fifth monk to the group, and you will diminish to a very appreciable extent the emotional power of this superb constellation of grief, without being able to say exactly why. It is hardly too much to say that he has here expressed more by the mere arrangement of the figures than by anything that they actually or obviously mean.

And in this art, too, Tiepolo will serve as our horrible example. He repeatedly inverted his principal figures, foreshortened them, crowded them into groups so compact that every member of them loses his individuality, or else tossed them to the wind as if they were no more than dry leaves. As a decorator he is not unworthy to hang beside Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese, but as a purveyor of meaning he falls below the lowest of his predecessors.

But this is only the physics of the subject and it has a chemistry as well; the artist is not restricted to shifting and enlarging and accenting his forms but may, as we have seen already, modify them subtly so that they become either more expressive or more beautiful. Of course in order to call into play these secondary meanings, which we usually call qualities or flavors, he has to modify to some extent the directly representative meanings but in all ordinary cases these changes are so slight compared to the changes which they introduce that they may be neglected. Yet the new compound which results differs from both form and meaning, just as a song differs from both its words and its music, and no one can determine precisely which of its qualities come from one parent and which from the other, although the fact of their double inheritance is usually apparent enough. When Watts, for instance, depicts his *Mammon* with heavy, sagging curves or inserts in his *Death* (Pl. 86) that mercilessly straight line which runs from the shoulder to the heel we can be fairly sure that he is not offering us pure representation but is supplementing it with form-qualities which fill out and intensify the strictly representative meanings.

The finest effects in Raphael's *Transfiguration* are produced by this means. The visionary quality of the three upper figures, for example, is achieved almost wholly by avoiding in their draperies any lines, forms, or colors which might seem either sharp, dramatic, decisive, massive, or energetic, or any single point which might draw the eye back to itself again and again and thus set up a center of definite interest; one's eye wanders rather aimlessly across these forms, with an increasing sense of their unreality.

Blake modified the quality of his shapes as he passed from one subject to another as naturally as an orator changes the

tones of his voice; his *Book of Job* alone contains such a variety of examples that it might well serve as a textbook of the subject. Greco was no less expressive, but his range was narrower and one feels that he had to strain to make his points, while Blake's forms came to him as easily as dreams.

All portrait-painters are obliged to draw heavily on these secondary meanings, partly because of the inherent difficulty of their task and partly to vary the natural monotony of their subject-matter. Titian constructed his *Duke of Norfolk* (Pl. 29) almost entirely of secondary meanings. Cover everything below the chin, and the face appears undistinguished, and even uninteresting; only the eyes and the curling hair have any real vitality. Now add the crisp white collar and the tide of life rises a little in all the features. Let the massive shoulders and the heavy-linked chain return to the picture and note how much poise and power the former bring to the personality, while the latter strengthens and enriches the face somewhat as a frame does a picture that is placed within it. Add, finally, the two hands, with their white cuffs, to balance the face and point it up and bring to completion the line begun in the shoulders, and you have a portrait which need not fear competition with the profoundest psychological studies which the art has produced, for it expresses, as well as a painter can, the power, the dignity, the individuality, and the deep mystery of human existence. Yet the face, in which expression is generally supposed to reside, is little more than the spot at which the secondary meanings are focused and seem to produce their effect, just as in the face itself the eyes are the focal point for all the other features. Holbein used similar methods in his *Sir Richard Southwell* (Pl. 28) but did not rely on them so completely. The chain, the buttons, the outline of the lapel, and the massive folds of the arm all play their part in the whole effect, but one can cover everything except the face without changing or weakening it; and even

here one can cover hair, eyes, and mouth and still find the same character stamped deeply in the lines of cheek and brow.

Every portrait-painter has his favorite, well-tried devices. Van Dyck (Pl. 30) had a special knack for arranging silks, velvets, and laces so that they bring out every latent hint of fineness in a face. Piero della Francesca, who had a number of tough old warriors to paint, used lines of almost geometrical rigor to suggest the granite in their characters. Rembrandt, in his later years, found that a rough and intricate texture in his paint was very helpful in depicting the complexities of character that a man has developed by the time he has reached old age.

The notion that the extreme differences in form and color which mark such individualists as Rembrandt, Bouts, Greco, and Cézanne may be attributed to differences in their vision has gained wide currency, but it is only one more of the many myths with which laymen, and sentimental critics, have tried to explain the endless mystery of art. In the argot of the studios, in which so many common words take on a special, esoteric meaning, one hears that so-and-so "sees" a thing one way and somebody else "sees" it differently, but this "seeing" refers to the coming picture and to the eye of the imagination and not to the way the original thing actually appears to the eyes of the body. No two eyes, of course, see exactly alike, but it is doubtful whether any eyes can have been sufficiently abnormal to explain all the peculiarities in the work of the four painters just mentioned. There is often some slight correlation between an eccentricity of vision and an eccentricity of style, and when there is it is a great advantage to the painter; but to attempt to explain all originality in this fashion is absurd. As if a great painter were slavishly bound to the world he actually sees, and could not, for the purposes of his art, invent another quite different one! One might as well

say that Wagner's music differs from Mozart's because he heard differently.

LIGHT AND COLOR

Light-forms and color-forms can also be amalgamated with meanings to produce something new that differs from either. The process of analysis in this field is unusually difficult but, again, one needs only a slight proficiency in the language of painting to realize that something of the sort has taken place. The purity of Angelico's color and the heavenly radiance of his light can hardly be overlooked, and neither can the intensely dramatic effects which Tintoretto stages with shafts and bursts of light. We discover quickly that Francia has surrounded the simple piety of his faces with colors that ring like the tones of church-bells, and that Botticelli worked with hues that magnify the undertone of disquiet that runs through all his figures. Thanks to the several versions that have come down to us of Rembrandt's *Philosopher in his Study* and *The Disciples at Emmaus* we can almost see him experimenting with various arrangements of light to determine which is most expressive. Moroni (Pl. 33) was in the habit of casting a silvery, shimmering veil of light across a face to give an appearance of greater unity in the character of the sitter. Caravaggio was an expert in the use of shadow.

THE DEGREE OF UNITY ATTAINABLE

Recent writers and painters have seriously questioned the possibility of imparting to the blend of form and meanings sufficient unity to give it æsthetic value, but I think they have overestimated the degree of unity which is necessary. Do not form and meaning unite, on the average, as closely as line and

color? Color and mass have been receiving special attention from the modernists, but even here the unity that has been attained is hardly greater than that of the best amalgams of form and meaning; and I do not think that any more can be said for color and movement, line and mass, or surface texture and light. And, unity for unity, I believe that the blend between form and meaning assays higher in æsthetic value than any of the others.

Landscapes probably afford the best field in which to study the subject. We do not go to them to learn what trees and clouds and mountains look like, nor even to enjoy the view, but almost wholly to enjoy the moods which the original scene evoked in the painter's mind. And it is almost self-evident that here, at least, the artist cannot express these moods by either meanings or forms alone but must use both, as impartially as a pianist uses both his hands, and blend the tones which come from them as easily as he blends his treble and his bass. For the things which he has to say are too rich to be either represented directly or suggested through pure form alone; neither method could convey more than a part of the whole.

Böcklin (Pl. 57) was constitutionally incapable of painting a scene as a camera might record it. He was a romantic Titan who labored under the necessity of filling out every form he touched until it gave forth a rotund organ-tone. Merely filling a picture with centaurs and satyrs does not set one's ears ringing with their hoof-beats, as a dozen or more of his canvases do; and neither does any conventional painting of allegories carry one back to that paradoxical springtime of life in which it is Death that is beautiful and Love that is terrible, and Age is a remote and incomprehensible state: it is only when these meanings are embodied in forms that look and feel to us as everything looked and felt in youth that the miracle takes place.

Homer Martin (Pl. 76) was as sensitive to the flavors and

the expressive qualities of forms as a poet is to the aura of associations that surrounds a word, and no less sensitive to the power of meanings to magnify five-, or ten-, or twenty-fold the beauty and mystery of a form. One feels the free interaction between them as in few other painters; though this is a field in which many American masters of landscape, from Albert Ryder and Inness to Daingerfield and Rockwell Kent, have been peculiarly at home.

But examples of this blending with meaning of not one element of form but many are not limited to landscapes. How perfectly the two groups coöperate in Rembrandt's *Resurrection* (Pl. 15)! The loneliness of the head in the corner of the tomb would lose much of its point if we were unaware that it represented Christ; and the supernatural splendor of the scene would be wasted if it had to be translated into terms of any lesser story than that of the resurrection. In both aspects of this art, in the use of meanings to draw more attention to a form than it could possibly attract unaided and in the use of forms to expand and ennoble a meaning, Rembrandt is a supreme master. He could, when he cared to, create forms that are glorious in themselves, apart from any reference to meaning; and he showed, in planning his illustrations of Biblical stories, a mastery of meanings independent of any support from form; but his greatest gift was the power to combine the two in works which approach the maximum of æsthetic value. His mind was a crucible into which he could throw with one hand a chapter from the Bible and with the other some preliminary outline of a composition, fuse them together in the heat of his genius, and draw out a masterpiece glowing, like a single ingot of molten metal, with reds, yellows, and golden browns and, within these, reverence, dignity, and mystery. If he had happened to devote his life to some theory of absolute painting we should still have had a series of very great masterpieces from his brush, but nothing quite com-

parable to those he actually painted. Not every painter is endowed with this particular power—but that is not the point at issue.

THE BALANCE BETWEEN FORM AND MEANING

A more vital problem, at least for the present age, is that of the permissible ratios between meaning and form. Throughout the three-hundred-year-long central plateau of painting, which extends roughly from Raphael to Ingres, this question seldom raised its head. There were, of course, frequent departures from the standard of everyday vision. Meaning was often a little scant in Guido Reni and sometimes, in another sense, in Zurbaran; and in Goya it was oftener than not a little too skeletonic for complete comfort. In the work of various other men form and meaning frequently played at cross purposes. Rubens, when he cared to take the trouble, could fit them splendidly to each other, but he was more likely to be careless or perfunctory, clothing nymphs, Holy Families, bacchanals, and martyrs alike in the same stock patterns. Tintoretto, who could occasionally, as in the *St. Ursula* (Pl. 65), strike out a perfect harmony, was also capable of such doubtful contrasts as we find in the *Last Supper* (Pl. 41) between the solemnity of the event and the furious gusto of his forms. Lotto's patriarchs are as nervous as rabbits and his apostles as restless as fleas (Pl. 46); and Lorenzo Monaco (Pl. 47) wrapped his long-faced, passive saints in a swirl of ecstatically dizzy lines. But, in general, good relations between form and meaning may be taken for granted, like good manners among gentlefolk.

But along the steep slopes that lead up to this plateau and down from it conditions are very different. In the work of the Primitives at one end and of the Expressionists, Cubists, and Post-Impressionists at the other, representative meaning is

relegated to the background and form dominates the composition. Memmi and Matisse alike introduce the human figure merely as a sort of title, to give the spectator a clue to the nature of their æsthetic thought; everything else in the picture is not representation but improvisation on a theme. We sometimes have difficulty in understanding the primitives because they do not speak our language, but their contemporaries must have understood them as easily as we do our daily cartoonists, whose methods of expression are also based largely on distortions of form. It is probable that the people of the twenty-fifth century will have at least as much trouble with our Expressionists, Futurists, and Synchromists, whom we are at last beginning to understand, after much urging.

Any reduction of meaning below a certain minimum or any striking disharmony between meaning and its form-accompaniment is always hazardous,—not wrong, for nothing that can properly be called art is wrong, but hazardous, in that it greatly decreases the probability that any large number of people will enjoy the picture or that those who do will enjoy it as intensely as they might a better-balanced composition. Meaning is unquestionably the first thing we look for in a form and if we find any hint of it we are invariably disappointed when the trail leads no further, or loses itself in an underbrush of irrelevant form. The true artist, fortunately, does not indulge in these commercial calculations but creates what he must, whether it happens to be minor or major, successful or unsuccessful; but it is better for the layman to know a little about the laws of æsthetic chance.

Luckily, most of us can adjust ourselves, to a certain extent, to these reductions in meaning whenever we can discover an adequate reason for them. If they serve to increase the beauty of a form we call them good with little hesitation. If representative meanings are suppressed to give fuller play to the expressive overtones of forms, as in the works of the Expres-

sionists, we can learn in time to find pleasure in this method of painting. Even Cubism, which breaks familiar forms into bits and scatters these bits chaotically over the canvas, is not wholly beyond our grasp when we have once become convinced that there is some æsthetic reason in it. But most of us would prefer, I think, when meaning sinks too low to have it eliminated entirely, turning the picture into a composition in pure form.

THE PICTURE AS A WHOLE

The union between form and meaning is probably the most important blend that can be made in painting, but a gifted, ambitious painter will try to achieve as many more as his subject permits,—line and color, light and mass, light and space, and the rest. He will not be content with the narrow, watertight-compartment sort of picture which our detached treatment of various topics may have suggested, but will try to combine all these various elements in a single compact organism, adding lines and colors and spaces and masses to each other just as he adds lines to lines and colors to colors, until the spectator can pass easily from one to the other, hardly conscious that he has made any such transition.

He may work toward unity and harmony like Francia (Pl. 7), whose colors, lines, shapes, and meanings all unite in a single harmonious chord, or like Spitzweg, who dissolved color, meaning, and atmosphere in a sort of opalescent liquor in which one catches now and then a glint of some one ingredient but only to lose it the next instant in the cloudy glow of the whole, or, most of all, like Titian, in whom all the elements which we call separate in other painters seem only different facets of a single invisible core that lies within them and gives them form and character. Or he may combine his elements by means of balance, contrast, modulation, or any of the other devices which

he is accustomed to apply within a single element, producing a sort of elaborate counterpoint of many voices, or a truly symphonic structure, in which two or three subjects are developed in a great variety of instruments. Considering the heterogeneous nature of the elements which enter into a painting this is probably the most practical type of composition for all but the very greatest geniuses. And I am inclined to think that even for them it offers greater opportunities than the pursuit of the stricter form of unity, just as it does to the musician.

PART III: PERSONALITY

CHAPTER XVII

SKILL, POWER, AND EASE

PERSONALITY

If the cultivated public of a generation ago had been offered as many pages as this about art without any reference to the personality of the artist it would have been puzzled and perhaps even offended. But in our more materialistic age the public has been so thoroughly sold on the idea that nothing in art except form has any true æsthetic value that I doubt whether many of my readers have even noticed the omission.

Yet even the most fanatical propagandists for form,—whether they speak of it as pure, absolute, beautiful, expressive, significant, or emphatic,—slip, on at least every other page, into some inadvertent reference to personality and, with amusing naïveté, leave it dangling its heels there without making any attempt to provide a place for it in their theory. Even in a science as haphazard and irregular as æsthetics there is little virtue in suppressing facts to save a theory, and the fact of personality happens to be one of the hardest in all art to conceal or deny. It will be much better to try to find some orderly place for it in our analysis of æsthetic experience.

No one can doubt, I think, that any form, whether it is enjoyed most as representation, as expression, or as beauty, is much more interesting when we know it to be the work of human hands. Our innate interest in everything human, added to our memories of our own immature efforts to produce art, takes care of that. The only question is whether this increment of pleasure deserves to be called æsthetic. To any-

one who accepts the concept on which this book is based,—namely, that the proper task of æsthetics is to investigate all the factors which affect our pleasure in a work of art and all the relationships that develop between them, instead of merely trying to determine which of these factors or relationships happens to be most characteristic of the experience or to play the largest part in it,—this question will seem purely rhetorical; to other readers I might suggest that personality differs in no essential respect from the various other meanings which can be read from art-forms—beauty, flavor, and representative meanings—and is in no way less fitted to afford æsthetic pleasure. To try to exclude it from the whole complex is an arbitrary and wholly illogical act.

SKILL

We are constitutionally incapable of studying a picture for long without beginning to cast about for some explanation of its existence, and especially its existence in that particular form; and this is where the figure of the artist first enters into our experience. We think of him not as a personality, in any complex sense of the word, but merely as the force which called the picture into being; he hardly exists for us outside its pattern of colors; we separate him from it only enough to enable us to enjoy, as a distinctive element in our pleasure, our delight in the skill that enabled him to create it. He counts as one more meaning to be read from its forms.

But this is not the whole story. His skill, instead of making us jealous or envious because it surpasses our own, delights us, strangely enough, as if it were we ourselves who had painted the picture, or one of our dearest friends. Instead of regarding the artist as a competitor to be outdone if possible we look on him either as one whose sole object in life is to minister to our pleasure or, on a somewhat higher plane,

as a kindred spirit who is to be cherished as if he were a sort of projection of ourselves. The recognition of this peculiarly intimate relationship releases so many inhibitions, frees so many enthusiasms, and, in its higher form, gives to the whole experience so much of that idealistic flavor which is so valuable an ingredient in art, that it must be accounted one of the most potent forces in the whole range of æsthetic experience. We shall return to it in later chapters.

In the earliest stages of appreciation it is the feats which we cannot understand at all, such as the painting of textures and of water and of eyes that follow us around a room, which give us the most pleasure; we judge painting as if it were a species of magic. The sense of being in the presence of something almost miraculous sensitizes us to all the other pleasures which the picture affords, intensifies them, and raises the whole experience to a higher pitch of consciousness.

Later, when we have begun to look at pictures more critically, learned a few of the tricks of the trade, and discovered some of the differences between good workmanship and bad, the mystery fades, but only to give place to an appreciation of fine craftsmanship which opens the way to even greater pleasures. It finds its greatest æsthetic usefulness in providing a stronger incentive for careful attention to the details of the picture and in enabling us to dwell longer over it, but like most elements in art it has a variety of other functions as well.

But in the end the concept of magic creeps back, for in the present state of our knowledge of art we cannot well get on without it. We begin to pick out from the ranks of excellent craftsmen,—the Watteaus, Terborchs, and Degases,—a few who are clearly something more than craftsmen, because they are born with something in them which mere technical proficiency can never rival. Craftsmanship is too narrow a word for Rembrandt's power of packing a few pen-strokes with layer on layer of inexhaustible meaning, or for Veronese's al-

most infallible eye for color-values, or for the combination of gifts which enabled Vermeer to paint with such truth to nature. Mere perseverance at his trade will never enable any ordinary painter to produce works as fine as theirs; the only men who can create them are those who come into the world with a head-start,—and the common word for such head-starts is genius, which is in turn only a modern version of the ancient word magician. And the thought that one is communing with genius has always proved a wonderful intensifier of æsthetic experience.

POWER

The word skill suggests effort directed toward a definite, predetermined goal, and accordingly seems to apply better to the representation of preëxisting things than to the creation of new ones; when we wish to speak of ability to compose it seems more natural to use the word power. The representative artist is, to be frank and unsentimental, a very marvelous machine for reproducing whatever is set before it; but the composer is an unpredictable force, who is constantly compelling whatever comes under his hand to assume some wholly new form which he has invented only the moment before. Set two representative painters to portraying the same scene and the greater their skill the more closely their pictures will resemble each other; but give two composers the same basic theme and the greater their power the more their pictures will differ. The representer achieves his goal by means of certain mechanisms which he has built up within himself by years of practice; the composer, by means of a hard, direct battle with the inertia of his forms, his medium, and his own mind, in which his previous knowledge is only of incidental importance. The latter is by far the more dynamic figure of the two: the personality which one reads, as a meaning, from his forms is more vivid, more

dramatic, and more strongly colored with all the qualities which distinguish a personality from a machine; and its value as a stimulant for the whole æsthetic experience is much greater.

Of course a powerful genius for composition is no longer needed, as it once was, to block out the basic framework of a composition, for this art has now been reduced to a science and can be learned at school quite as easily as the science of representation. But building the superstructure, carrying out a symphonic development of its elementary themes into delicate, palpitating æsthetic tissues, and grafting these tissues into the more solid part of the framework so that no one can tell where life ends and frame begins—this is still a task which only a powerful and original mind can accomplish with any notable degree of success. It is impossible to study any great composition deeply without realizing what a great expenditure of human energy it represents.

It is sometimes hard to distinguish an artist's power as a composer from his strength as a personality, notably so in the case of Ingres and Michelangelo, but as one's acquaintance with art grows the two concepts become more and more distinct. In Tiepolo and Cézanne one feels that the power expressed belongs almost wholly to the artist rather than to the man; and one is sure that the fire which burned in Goya the artist differs considerably from the fire which animated his life as a man, and that a similar distinction may be made in the case of Greco and Van Gogh. And one suspects that Tintoretto may have lived quietly enough outside his art, although there he is a whirlwind that catches up giants and hurls them through space, a conflagration that fills this space with light and with the shadows of great masses, and a rushing torrent which sweeps obstacles from its path as if they were straws and carves a new channel for itself with each new flood of inspiration.

Perhaps his power is most evident in his single figures.

Compare any of his forms with some other that seems to offer itself as a rival—the woman at the extreme right of *The Finding of the Body of St. Mark* (Pl. 74) with Correggio's St. George (Pl. 52), who is standing in much the same attitude; or St. Mark himself, at the extreme left, with Greco's Christ in the *Resurrection* (Pl. 16); or the flying angels in the *Annunciation* and the *St. Ursula* (Pls. 65, 69) with Rembrandt's in *Tobias* (Pl. 68)—and you will find in each case that his is more dynamic and more godlike, perhaps even verging on the sublime. And this sublimity is a product not primarily of representation but of composition, or of that subtle modification of natural forms which is only a special form of composition.

In Teniers, Velasquez, Vermeer, and Zuloaga (Pl. 61) one feels power not so much in active as in latent form—a reserve strength which seems equal to any demands that are likely to be made on it—but this does not diminish its æsthetic value. In describing the ability of Whistler, Burne-Jones, Andrea del Sarto, and Angelico to fill their forms, down to the smallest details, with æsthetic vitality one hardly thinks of using the word power at all, but whatever their gift may be it plays much the same part in our æsthetic experience as power in its most vigorous forms.

At first glance, the compositions of a highly academic painter such as Leighton (Pl. 4) are likely to suggest great power, but on studying them more carefully one begins to feel that this power, if it ever existed, must have suffered some strange transformation between the brain and the picture,—as if, perhaps, the composition had been planned in a vigorous mind but turned over to an unoriginal, though well-trained, hand to execute, as the older masters often turned over their sketches to a pupil to make into finished pictures. When one has lived for a time with a print of the *Herakles* it reveals itself as so lifeless that even a Cimabue (Pl. 45) seems fresh and elastic

by comparison. If the mathematicians ever attempt to express pictures by algebraic formulas I am sure that Leighton's will be among the first to be conquered.

EASE

There is a third quality, closely related to skill and power, which the casual onlooker values more than either. If he hears, or thinks he can read in the picture itself, that it was painted with great rapidity, it will go up in his estimation, for he believes firmly that the ability to work rapidly and easily is the surest sign of genius. Or if he hears that one of his favorite pictures evolved slowly, through many revisions that extended over a long period of years, he will feel as if half his illusions about it had been shattered and will think less of it forevermore. With our inveterate tendency toward myth-making in matters of art, we are all inclined to build up behind every admirable picture an image of an artist great enough to dash it off in an hour or two, with little conscious expenditure of effort; and to have this image suddenly toppled over is a serious blow.

A picture which has an air of having been painted easily will always have an advantage over one which seems labored, for this appearance of ease is not only an interesting and agreeable element in itself but it acts as a *lubricant* for all the other æsthetic processes which the picture may set in motion. When we are able to feel that the work before us was done lightly and rapidly the whole task of perceiving it is lightened.

Ease is one of the principal charms of the High Renaissance; and it is the chief hallmark of that earlier flowering-time in painting which we owe to the great Italians who were born in the first quarter of the fifteenth century,—Francesca Cossa, Piero della Francesca, Melozzo da Forlí, Gian Bellini (Pl. 51), and the many lesser luminaries who gathered around them.

Because their masterpieces were scattered in time and were not produced by any one geographical school their unity has generally been overlooked, but they are bound together by a technical mastery and a serenity which are rare in both their immediate predecessors and their immediate followers; and as these two qualities are precisely those which distinguish every æsthetic maximum in the history of art from the depressions on both sides of it, it seems highly desirable to consider them, for once, as a unified group. They all emerged, as if on a single wave of reaction, from the somberness, the narrowness, and the intensity of Giotto and Masaccio, and, instead of plunging at once into the laborious researches conducted later by Ucello, Signorelli, and the Pollajuoli, paused for a few years to enjoy the fruits of what art had already won, standing in the middle of their century as serenely as a chain of mountain peaks rising above a sea of clouds. The calm, statuesque beings in Cossa's great altarpiece at Bologna—certainly the masterpiece most typical of the whole group—are as homely as Abraham Lincoln but have by way of compensation not a little of his deep humanity and his vast equanimity. And the Schifanoia frescoes at Ferrara are surely the most authentic visualization in all the arts of that Golden Age of which men have never ceased to dream. Even Giorgione lacks the spacious tranquillity of these earlier men; I know of no better group in which to study the specific charm of ease.

Yet the appearance of ease is often deceptive, proving on analysis to be, as in the case of Raphael, only the art that conceals art, or betraying the fact that the artist carefully chose a subject safely within his powers. Ease is not an absolute quality like skill and power but a relative one, depending on the ratio between ability and the task to be accomplished. Even a painter as primitive as Margaritone (Pl. 26) can give an impression of ease if he is careful never to attempt anything too difficult. Neither skill nor power alone assure ease, as we

may learn from Dou and Piero della Francesca, who were heavily endowed, one with skill and the other with power, but were anything but easy in their manner of painting; and that ease is not dependent on either we may learn from Cranach, whose skill was slight, and from Luca Giordano, whose power was nil. A few painters, of course, are so gifted that one cannot imagine a problem difficult enough to make their work seem labored—Tintoretto leads the list, followed closely by Rubens—but the majority owe whatever impression of ease they may give to an exact knowledge of the limits of their powers, supplemented by wisdom enough to keep within them. Teniers, for instance, gained his reputation for virtuosity by attacking problems which, though genuinely difficult, like the representation of a cord stretched between two posts or a slender stick leaning at an angle against the wall, are really very narrow. Pit him against Brouwer in some of the larger, broader problems of the art of painting and he seems very ineffectual.

Again, great power and great skill add something tangible to a work—either grandeur of composition or subtlety and completeness of representation—but ease adds nothing but itself. And as it increases it tends to become a vice rather than a virtue. Luca Giordano—Luca Fa Presto—preferred to be known as a painter who could work fast rather than as one who could paint well,—with the result that to-day he either bores or disgusts us. The fluent cleverness of Giovanni di Paolo is particularly irritating,—perhaps because we have been taught to think that everyone who flourished before the year 1500 always took his art with peculiar seriousness. He could paint with equal facility in all the styles known to the early fifteenth century; he was as skilful at composing as he was at copying nature, and could invent brilliantly wherever invention seemed to be indicated; and he even created a number of memorable figures and groups; but his mind was tightly closed

to all the new ideas that were fermenting around him, and he never failed to choose the easiest and most conventional aspect of any subject instead of letting it simmer in his mind, after the manner of his contemporaries, until it flowered in some unique and powerful expression. One need only compare his *Last Judgment,* in Siena, with Angelico's in Florence to take the measure of the man. The incidents in his picture are all perfectly suitable for a Last Judgment,—but that is all; there is nothing in it to capture one's imagination and set it on fire. Angelico's heaven is built of gold and jasper and chalcedony, but Giovanni's is merely lath and plaster. In fact, he was so monotonously facile that slowness and dullness must have seemed virtues in Siena for a hundred years after his death! Correggio was born no less fluent but kept his fatal gift firmly under control. Rembrandt and Giorgione (Pl. 31) give the impression of having expended on each task just as much power as it demanded, no more and no less, and it is this more than anything else that gives them their place in our estimation as honest, serious, and competent craftsmen.

Too great a facility, instead of enabling an artist to express more of what he has to say, is likely to tempt him into saying less, draining off only the froth that forms on the upper levels of his consciousness instead of tapping its depths. It is the men who have to struggle to win their way to any expression at all who are most likely to speak from the deepest levels of their experience; it is Flaubert and Cézanne who become profound and moving artists, not Dumas and Cazin. Facility entertains us for a time but what we ultimately ask of art is that it shall reveal to us the full richness, beauty, and depth of human experience, and facility is only an obstacle to such revelations.

It is notable that in men of the caliber of Vermeer, Leonardo, and Titian we seldom think either of ease or of the lack of it; their work moves on a plane that transcends facility al-

together. And before a Michelangelo or a Rembrandt it would seem impertinent to ask how many days the artist spent over his picture or whether he found the work hard or easy; all this fades before the magnitude of what he has expressed.

Yet I cannot leave the subject without admitting once more that ease in its finest manifestations is a delightful thing. We admire skill and power because they can overcome difficulties, but ease does not seem even to recognize them. It stands a step higher than either skill or power, being, so to speak, a skill in using skill and a power of applying power; and at its best it adds a buoyancy to our æsthetic experience which is not to be had from any other source.

CHAPTER XVIII

INVENTION AND IMAGINATION

INVENTION

In dealing with the representative side of his art the painter may display not only skill but invention, that is to say he may originate new meanings in addition to copying those he sees before him. Æsthetically, invention acts on us very much like power to compose; in fact, a good composition is usually built up by means of one *technical* invention after another, but somehow,—perhaps because we take originality for granted in composition as we do not in representation,—we are less likely to think of inventions in this field as inventions. When one is in search of a typical inventor, Archipenko, whose whole artistic life is devoted to inventing new forms, new conventions, new symbols, and new mediums, comes less readily to mind than Hieronymus Bosch, who, though not half so original, confined his efforts to representative forms.

Bosch is an excellent specimen of the inventive painter. Each of the fantastic monsters which crowd his canvases is a new creation, which cannot be found in nature; and he pours them out so prolifically that one gets the impression that he valued painting chiefly for the chance it gave him to create them. Incidentally, these strange figures illustrate very clearly the two principal functions of invention in the field of painting: the mental stimulation which comes from novelty, and the chance to escape for a moment or two from routine, prose, and practicality.

Yet Bosch, in spite of his value as a type, takes low rank as an inventor, for the kind of thing he does is too easy. A child

equipped with a Sears, Roebuck catalog, an animal book, a pair of scissors, and a pot of glue could turn out monsters quite as fantastic by the simple process of slicing up the pictures and gluing the pieces together at random. Brueghel, when he had constructed his grotesqueries by the same formula, somehow managed to weld their incompatible parts together and breathe into them the equivalent of a soul, which drives them on to commit the terrible, inhuman deeds that one expects from such strange hybrids; but Bosch's remain empty shells, mounted in lifelike attitudes but as dead as the bodies of wasps and spiders in a museum.

On the whole, probability, or at least plausibility, is worth more than unreality in an invention. If the inventor decides to recognize this fact and confine himself to beings and situations that might easily have existed, he will find the most favorable field for the display of his powers in illustration; for it is so extremely easy here to follow the well-worn path of tradition,—or, if there happens to be no tradition, to set down only the obvious aspects of a story,—that the art of the inventor shines out brilliantly by comparison. Even a little entertaining byplay, as simple as the dog sniffing at the feet of the dead child in Jordaens's *Judgment of Solomon,* or that youth of Masaccio's who shivers as he stands naked in the wind waiting his turn to be baptised, or Benozzo's *vergognosa* holding her hand before her face for shame at Noah's nakedness, but peeping through her fingers so as not to miss the entertaining spectacle, is enough to make its inventor famous for centuries.

Every illustration of Benozzo's (Pl. 22) is a mosaic of inventions large and small. When he painted the miracle of Aaron's rod turning to a serpent he was not satisfied to depict a mild, conventional snake but created a fierce little dragon with elaborate wings,—and left the end of the tail in Aaron's hand, still unchanged from the original rod! In the *Birth of*

Jacob and Esau he gives us a delightfully humorous contrast between an innocent-faced Esau, covered with curly hair and sitting with his finger in his mouth, and a beautiful Jacob, golden hair parted in the middle, already conscious of his own pulchritude and looking the least bit deceitful,—a tissue of inventions thrown over the simple theme supplied by the Bible. And when he comes to Joseph escaping from Potiphar's wife he boldly transforms the story to suit his own satirical tastes, making Joseph a calculating hypocrite who, having coolly weighed the relative merits of the immediate pleasures offered him by Mrs. Potiphar and the worldly advantages which would accrue to him later if he were careful not to lose her husband's favor, decided for the latter and fled! His Joseph in this incident looks more like a figure out of Hogarth than like the work of a fifteenth century primitive.

Every primitive, in fact, is forced to do a great deal of inventing, for he has neither enough tradition nor enough knowledge to supply all his needs; every picture presents some emergency which he must meet with his own resources. Fortunately, being blissfully unsophisticated, he is not ashamed of these makeshifts and sees no need for concealing them. When Cranach was ignorant of the true structure of a joint he invented a plausible substitute—delighted, apparently, with his own cleverness—and turned lightly to the next problem; when the unknown painter of the *Triumphs* in the Accademia at Siena needed a team of elephants to draw one of his chariots he cobbled them together as best he could, troubling himself little more about exact truth than he had with the unicorns in the previous picture. And when the primitive does not absolutely need to invent he is apt to invent anyway, like Benozzo, out of high spirits and unlimited naïveté.

Carpaccio's invention (Pl. 59) was neither so exuberant nor so original as Benozzo's, for he was not satirist and epic poet

combined, like the Florentine, but merely a charming novelist; yet the invention which he does display is mellower and blends more smoothly with the other elements in the picture. His inventive faculty is rooted, one might say, in his sympathies rather than in his intellect. In analyzing the invention in his *Dream of St. Ursula* or in the *St. Jerome in his Study* one is reminded of Stevenson, writing "Treasure Island" to amuse a small, sick boy in the next room, for they are designed with as much care as he might have expended on an actual bedroom for his young daughter and a study for a scholarly grandfather.

Memlinc had as strong an instinct for invention as Carpaccio but it was complicated by an equally strong instinct for concealing his inventions after they had been made. He preferred to satisfy his desire to invent with some unobtrusive bit of byplay which no one would notice at first glance—a head peering unexpectedly through a window, a hand grasping a dog's ear scissor-fashion, or an odd way of curling hair—as if he were scheming to add to the spectator's normal pleasure in novelty that extra shock of surprise which always accompanies the discovery of something that one has overlooked again and again. And his little inventions do keep bobbing into consciousness long after one is sure that the last one has been found.

Brueghel's powers of invention were by no means limited to the creation of monsters, but shone even more brilliantly in his handling of illustrations. Here he is unsurpassed, even by Benozzo. Of course he chose subjects which are peculiarly adapted to an inventive treatment,—but that is only one more proof of his power. Yet he was not primarily an inventor, but a realist who turned to invention as a means of realizing truth with extraordinary vividness. Like H. G. Wells in his scientific romances, he never abandoned a theme until he had wrung it dry, and, in the process, raised it to a terrible intensity; and

he is as mordant as Goya and as macabre as Poe. The dreadful details of his *Triumph of Death* (Pl. 12) hammer on one's brain like the successive concussions of a thunderstorm.

We can also learn something about invention from men like Rubens (Pls. 10, 63) in whom it was lacking. He poured out a greater variety of actions, attitudes, and gestures than any other painter, but they are all commonplace, conventional goods taken from stock; the supply on the shelves of his memory merely happened to be unusually large. No gesture seems unusually apt, or powerful, or original, or gives an impression of having been designed especially for one given situation; and they afford hardly a trace of that mixture of surprise and pleasure with which we respond to every fine invention. As an illustrator, Rubens was merely an unusually gifted hack.

In its æsthetic function, invention does not differ materially from skill, power, and ease. It merely broadens our picture of the artist by adding to it his intellect, for invention is essentially an intellectual process. We see the artist, through his inventions, not merely as a machine or a force, but as a being who rises, intellectually at least, to full human stature and expands to full human breadth.

IMAGINATION

There is another form of creative activity which might be described as invention spread out thin instead of being concentrated at a few points, or, to choose a more poetic metaphor, as the full-grown plant of which invention is only the seed. It seems to me that the most appropriate word for this mature type of creation is imagination.

No very sharp boundary line can be run between invention and imagination, for there is a broad transition zone in which it is purely a matter of taste or judgment whether we apply

one term or the other, but well-defined examples of each can always be clearly distinguished. An inventive picture resembles a group of hills; an imaginative one, a single broad mesa. Any invention in a painting can be neatly described in a few words, but an imaginative structure eludes the grasp of words as completely as a symphony. An invention is a sort of ornament added to the rest of the picture, but whatever is imagined forms an integral part of the whole work. The pleasure offered by imagination even rests on a somewhat different basis. In invention, it is the degree of novelty that determines the degree of pleasure,—combined, of course, with the nicety with which the invention is adapted to its special purpose in the picture; but in imagination pleasure depends chiefly on the completeness of the thing imagined, and on the consistency of each part with every other,—in short, on the perfection of the whole as a whole.

Rubens might file a more valid claim to imagination than to invention, because his creative activity is so evenly distributed over his canvas, but I think most people feel that its intensity is too low—remembering always that we are now speaking solely of the creation of meanings—to deserve that name either. Brueghel's figures, considered as individuals, are so intense, so strongly unified, and above all so real that one must attribute the best of them, at least, to imagination; but the pictures taken as a whole, because they are so bizarre, so uneven, and so glitteringly intellectual, must be classed as inventions. It is not the intensity or depth of the creative activity involved that is the test, but its type. Tintoretto's *Christ before Pilate* is often cited as a splendid work of imagination, but it seems to me that most of its impressiveness can be explained as a product of invention and composition; and much the same may be said of Botticelli's *Pietà* (Pl. 8) and Piero della Francesca's *Resurrection.* Among the individual figures

in these pictures, Botticelli's Christ is the most nearly imagined; and among the pictures as a whole the *Christ before Pilate.*

Benozzo's case is somewhat like Brueghel's: many of his single figures are very finely imagined, but he seldom succeeded in visualizing a whole composition with equal power,—and to perceive his deficiencies as an illustrator one need only compare his *Vision of St. Augustine* with Botticelli's. But his single figures! Who has ever imagined so many proud, piquant, sensitive, flower-like beings, or movement that was so much like a perfume? Many artists have *painted* finer figures; but when one learns to see in Benozzo's not the figure which is actually there but the one the artist would have liked to create, the figure as it appeared in his imagination, they take on, in spite of their awkwardness and crudity, a rare fineness. He somehow suggests, if he does not succeed in painting in the fullest sense of the word, an exquisite blend of physical beauty, grace, pride, and some impalpable quality of inner life,—as if he had seen each of them in that one brief moment, the hour, day, or month, somewhere between the awkwardness of youth and the hardness of maturity, in which life comes to full bloom. He is as typical of the first freshness of the Renaissance as Titian is of its maturity.

Benozzo imagined a quality of life; Perugino (Pl. 85), a new human type,—which reaches its height in the *Santa Maria Maddalena* in the Pitti. The smooth, olive-hued oval of the face one can, of course, still see any hill-town in Umbria, but the soul within, which sets one dreaming of sunken ships, with strange forms hovering about the portholes in the dim sunlight that has wavered down to them, can have originated only in the imagination of the painter, for it is too remote from human realities to occur in nature and yet too complete within itself to be the product of mere invention. Greuze evolved a type (Pl. 32) which, while it is no less distinctive

than Perugino's and surely departs as far from reality, is too carelessly and flimsily put together to be attributed to imagination. And it carries, in addition, a still more serious disqualification: we are unwilling to award our highest terms of praise, such as imagination, to any work whose origin is other than purely creative, that is to say which satisfies some other purpose in the artist than the desire to give his creative vision the finest possible embodiment, and Greuze's frail but charming damsels fall far short of this ideal of disinterestedness, being merely the embodiment of a very clever *argumentum ad hominem*.

One thinks of the conventional illustrator merely as an illustrator, taking for granted whatever imagination he may put into his work. Giotto, Sodoma, and Terborch represent a transitional stage in which, although the illustrator still occupies the foreground, one sees a powerful imaginative artist standing behind him and guiding his hand. Each of them reveals a different aspect of the part which imagination plays in illustration: Sodoma (Pl. 18) could reconstruct the most hackneyed subject from some wholly novel point of view; Giotto (Pl. 1) used his imagination chiefly to detect and discover the most important elements in a story; Terborch's (Pl. 80) special virtue was thoroughness, which enabled him to reconstruct some simple incident in the lives of two or three people so completely that one feels as if one had known them intimately for years.

In Böcklin (Pls. 57, 75) one begins to attend more to the man of imagination than to the illustrator. This is in part, perhaps, because he seldom illustrated a definite story but chose rather the general concepts of legend and mythology; but this choice, in turn, was probably dictated by a tyrannical imagination which wished to be left as free as possible. In dealing with these subjects he created not merely new embodiments of legendary beings—centaurs, tritons, and satyrs—but also a

suitable world, many æons younger than our own, for them to live in. And they are so well adapted to it that a visitor from Mars might naturally assume that these very earthy creatures were the aborigines of our planet, and all its other inhabitants, from lizards to men, merely foreign invaders like himself who had not yet become wholly adapted to their new surroundings.

In studying Böcklin's symbolic figures one feels that they too were powerfully imagined. There are a number of decided exceptions to this statement—the conventional female figures which he labelled Spring, Flora, and the like—but give him some more vital subject such as "Death," "War," or "Pestilence" and he could turn out as powerful a masterpiece as the nature of symbolism, rather unreal or meager at best, would permit. Beside Böcklin, Watts (Pl. 86) seems misty and bookish.

Doré could impregnate a landscape with mystery and gloom but this marks the limits of his powers; when he attempted either human or mythological beings he could turn out only a string of lay-figures. He could paint nothing that he had not seen, nor insert in his illustrations anything that he had not found word for word in his text; and his picture never rises, as do all the great imaginative illustrations, to full equality with the text but always remains clearly subordinate to it. One cannot imagine him creating out of his own brain a *Pestilence* or *Silence in the Forest.*

Both in his symbolism and in his mythology Böcklin struck out a number of forms which have the air of having been done once for all, so thoroughly that they will never have to be revised. Other generations may discover new aspects of the same fundamental ideas and set them down in their own fashion, but one feels that the particular aspects which he chose to express have been given their definitive form. And the particular frame of mind to which they appeal is so fundamental in human experience that the finest of his works may safely be

ranked as classic,—a classic work being one that appeals primarily to those elements in human nature which do not change but remain essentially the same from age to age,—although from every other point of view he is a romantic of an extreme type. If he is now beginning to seem outmoded it is solely, I think, as a romanticist and a craftsman and not as a master of imagination.

Dürer, in spite of his meticulous realism, must be classed with the great imaginative artists. His friend Camerarius wrote of him, "He sometimes began a drawing of a composition or of a body in different places, wide apart, which yet, when he came to connect them, united so perfectly that nothing more coherent could be imagined"; and he himself once said, "A good painter is full of figures within, and, even if it were possible that he should live forever, he would always have some new thing from his inward stock of ideas to pour forth through his works." The finest of the forms that he imagined are even more classic than Böcklin's; and his pictures as a whole, when regarded as illustrations, possess some innate authority which forces us to accept them, for the moment at least, as if they were not mere visualizations of their stories but the reports of an eye-witness. Not even Raphael and Rembrandt, great as they were in illustration, could rival him in this, for there is a shade too much of the showman in both, so that one is always as much aware of their art as of the thing it has created. Dürer's pictures may not stir us as greatly but they impose themselves on us with the finality of a photograph. One cannot say where realism ends in them and imagination begins, for the real forms and meanings are so thoroughly conventionalized and the imaginary ones so minutely and carefully visualized, that in general truth to nature there is little choice between them.

Dürer's greatest weakness as an imaginative artist lies in the amount of attention which he gives to form as form. It results,

it is true, in a beautiful balance between form and meaning, in which the development of each seems to depend wholly on the needs of the other, and this is the chief source of that classic quality of which we have just been speaking; yet since imagination is essentially a faculty of creating meanings any part of a man's power that is diverted to form for form's sake will, from this narrowly specialized point of view, be lost. How much more imagination there is in Turner's dragon in the *Garden of Hesperides* (Pl. 77) than in the pair of them in Dürer's *Christ Descending into Hell* (Pl. 84)! One man was wholly absorbed in meanings, caring only to create a monster that should be horrid and awe-inspiring; while the other was more anxious to design a shape whose parts should all be harmonious,—with the result that, although it is intellectually satisfying as a species of saurian, it is no more terrifying than a chameleon.

Turner could, when he chose, produce pictures of a highly imaginative type, but in most of his compositions imagination appears, if at all, only as a thin, shimmering veil drawn over some extremely accurate transcription from nature to make it mysterious and wonderful. This gift of transforming some simple English landscape into a vision of an idyllic land, or a prosaic breakfast at Petworth into a scene of radiant and unearthly splendor, gave him a place among landscape painters which until recent years was unique. Constable, painting as St. Thomas or St. Peter might have done if he, instead of Luke, had been the painter among the apostles, was the typical figure, and Turner, painting like John on the Island of Patmos, the exception. Maxfield Parrish is often termed an imaginative painter but, like Bosch, he has done little more than put together charming, but almost photographic, details in very charming patterns; Turner's imagination, one might say, begins where his leaves off and does not rest until it has changed, slightly, the very cells of the trees and the molecules of the

rocks. Wiertz painted giants and Sir Noel Paton fairies with less real imagination than Turner put into his shrubbery. In his company even Claude seems rather prosaic.

In most pictures one arrives slowly, after considerable study of their forms, at a concept of the imagination that created them, but in Michelangelo's frescoes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel the powerful imagination of the man leaps out at one almost immediately, before one has had time to take in the details of the separate panels. And even later, when one knows them by heart, imagination still remains the dominant factor in one's enjoyment. Details such as the famous eyes of the Delphic sibyl or Eve's eyes in the *Creation of Man* (Pl. 48) stir us most deeply not by what they express but by the impression which they give of having been greatly and even sublimely imagined. The greatness of the *Creation of Man* as an illustration depends largely on the fact that the subject which it had to illustrate, namely great creative power, was precisely the thing with which its painter was supremely endowed. And the fact that the whole decorative scheme is dominated by huge figures of prophets and sibyls, instead of by warriors, kings, priests, and judges, is due to the better chance which they offered for the exercise and display of this one superlative gift of imagination. The things that other artists have imagined may be more entertaining, and in details sometimes more satisfying, than Michelangelo's, but none of them have his tremendous power. The force that flows out from this painted ceiling seems to lift the little knots of people that gather on the floor beneath it as an incoming tide lifts ships at anchor in a harbor. I have watched hundreds of people in the Sistine Chapel, among them the usual proportion of the sort who in ordinary collections of pictures grow either bored or flippant, and have seen only one who was not deeply impressed,—and he was a fat, middle-aged, indomitably jovial Chinaman who was cursed with one of those voluble guides who are to

tourists in Italy what flies are to horses. In crude power over the unthinking multitude this fresco marks the very summit of painting, and I believe that this power must be attributed chiefly to the sublimity with which it was imagined.

Tintoretto possessed an imagination of Titanic energy and Gargantuan strength, but its strength was blind and its energy unfocused. It would be more exact to say that his imagination possessed him. It wandered restlessly in an undefined limbo between imagination, invention, and pure creation. Meanings drift through it in great chaotic clouds, and the gigantic forms in which they incarnate themselves stem from some prehistoric age in which self-consciousness and self-mastery had not yet been evolved. Yet nothing that entered the picture could escape the transforming touch of this huge force; it enabled him to paint patriarchs, Principalities, and Powers that are not unworthy to stand beside the sibyls and prophets of Michelangelo, and an *Archangel Destroying Satan* which the great Florentine himself could not have equaled. We may sum up his powers in the statement that he was born heir to *The Last Judgment* as surely as Michelangelo was to *The Creation of Man.*

In general, imagination reveals to us a broader segment of a personality than either skill, power, ease, or invention, because it is so much more deeply involved with meanings. We can enjoy a chair, a vase, a bit of absolute painting, or any other exercise in pure form with comparatively little thought of the man who created it, but as soon as we encounter meanings in a work of art we are obliged to invoke a personality to explain them. And in the case of imagination, which as we have seen permeates every part of a picture, this personality-meaning becomes so intimately welded to the forms which we attribute to it that it takes on a high æsthetic value for anyone who is able to decipher it in these forms. It is one of the highest forms which the æsthetic activity of an artist can take.

CHAPTER XIX

VISION AND CONTEMPLATION

VISIONARIES

Tintoretto, who was not so much the possessor of an imagination as possessed by it, stands on the border-line between the imaginatives and another group of painters whom we may call the visionaries. They are distinguished from the imaginatives by the fact that their pictures give an impression of having sprung up spontaneously in their minds, like visions, instead of having been evolved more slowly at the cost of considerable mental labor. Naturally I do not pretend to assert that any given artist actually worked in one fashion or the other, but only that the spectator will come a little closer to the spirit of his work if he adopts one explanation of its origin rather than the other.

It is entirely possible to interpret Greco's *Resurrection* (Pl. 16) as a work of imagination, but it becomes more comprehensible and more vivid if we regard it as a flaming vision which for the time being took command of the artist's mind and dictated to him what he should paint. There is nothing calm or deliberate in the composition; these exultant bodies sweep heavenward like a roaring conflagration. If it is ever justifiable to speak of inspiration in connection with a laborious art like painting it is here. It should be noted, however, that inspiration does not necessarily imply æsthetic superiority. There are times when Greco's impetuosity is almost deliriously exciting and one wants to shout aloud that he is the greatest of painters; but there are other times—and these probably

occur a little more frequently—when he seems too naïve and too simple, too ebullient and too uncritical, to afford the highest pleasure; his pictures suggest some poverty of mind—they are whirlwinds in a desert rather than rich forests growing slowly out of deep fertile soil—and one begins to long for the cool poise of Velasquez or the calm luxuriance of Titian. Visionary pictures in general, as might be predicted, give one a feeble image of the artist as a creative force, but because they have welled up from hidden depths they are more deeply permeated with personality than if they had been created more or less artificially by his intellect. They are probably more in accord with the genius of painting than imaginative pictures.

The defects of the visionary method show up clearly when it is carried to an extreme, as in the case of Anton Wiertz. He was not inspired but obsessed; his pictures were dictated by the morbid complexes which had formed around his ideas of pain, cruelty, sex, madness, and death, and rarely rise above the psychic level of a nightmare; the Wiertz Museum in Brussels is a chamber of horrors. Yet even here the æsthetic value of the vision is apparent, for these pictures at least flowed freely and strongly from his mind, like cloth from a loom, and that alone endowed them with a hypnotic fascination which is clearly related to the fascination of Greco and Tintoretto.

Blake (Pl. 70), although he displayed none of the frenzy which we associate with the three painters just mentioned, was more thoroughly a visionary than any of them. "Art," he declared, "is inspiration. You have only to work up imagination to the state of vision and the thing is done." But his own visions apparently required little working up; they were such everyday occurrences in his life that he could record them as coolly as Vermeer did the walls and windows of his living-room. He defined vision, in fact, as "a representation of what exists, really and unchangeably"; and he seems

to have enjoyed a calm, unshakable certainty that whatever he saw and set down was eternally and unalterably true. In his personal life this certainty met with so much opposition that he became hot-tempered and fanatical, but in the realm of art he was beyond contradiction and his pictures took on the sweet assured reasonableness of a Francia or a Bellini, even when their subjects were horrific or madly improbable. His weakness lay in his unwillingness to correct or expand these visions in any way, and in his inability, on the rare occasions on which he did attempt such changes, to produce anything but feeble inventions or faint reminiscences of the forms that had been revealed to him in some previous vision. Like Greco, he is original, convincing, and hypnotic, but, on long acquaintance, a little thin.

Raphael, although he differs as much from Blake as he does from Greco, also belongs among the visionaries because his genius was essentially receptive rather than creative. Most of his finest pictures, such as the *Transfiguration,* the *St. Cecilia,* the *Vision of Ezekiel,* the *Madonna di Foligno* (Pl. 53), the *Disputà,* and the *Sistine Madonna,* either have a vision for their central incident or take the form of a vision vouchsafed to some mortal by a group of heavenly beings. Among the Madonnas, especially, the most successful are invariably those in which the mother and child are depicted not as human beings living on the earth but as saints who have descended from heaven for a moment to reveal themselves to some deserving worshiper. Many of the other pictures, such as the *Parnassus,* the *Sibyls,* and the *Galatea,* become more moving as soon as one begins to regard them not as direct representations of a given scene but as an idealized vision of it. And his greatest failures, on the other hand, are precisely those pictures in which he has tried hardest to be realistic,—such as the *Entombment,* the *Burning of the Borgo,* and the *Battle of Constantine.*

DREAMERS

I do not wish to lay too much emphasis on the particular words which I have chosen to clarify the creative aspect of painting—invention, imagination, vision, dream, and contemplation—or to give the impression that they represent a set of mutually exclusive compartments among which all paintings may easily be distributed. I use them merely to indicate certain peaks which rise at intervals from a long range of lesser ones and make convenient points of reference by which to explain the æsthetic topography of the group of foothills which surround them; instead of being separate units, each group merges imperceptibly into its neighbors.

For Giorgione, none of the three words we have used thus far seems wholly adequate: he lacks the intellectuality of the inventors and the imaginers, he is far more passive than the visionaries, and there is no trace in his work of exaltation or an instinct for display. What his pictures suggest more than anything else is a dream; they have the serene flow of consciousness, the slight sense of exhilaration, and the hint of unreality, which differentiate the dream-state from all others. All the figures that appear in them are themselves dreamers: they may seem to be absorbed in some casual task, or considerably interested in what is going on around them, but study their faces more carefully and you will discover that their thoughts have drifted as far from the practical world as the fixed stars are from the planets, and that they are wholly unconscious of their bodies, of their egos, and of each other; the minds of each of them are as solitary as if they were drifting alone in interstellar space. And Giorgione himself, we discover later, is the greatest dreamer of them all: it is hardly too much to say that he is the space in which they all float.

While this dream-consciousness is not precisely the same as

the state into which we fall in deep æsthetic enjoyment, it approaches it more closely than any other that we have yet studied and is one of the easiest gateways through which to enter it. As one sinks, under the painter's influence, into his dream, one tension after another relaxes, ambitions and desires are lulled to sleep, every sense of time and place vanishes, until one is wholly free to lose oneself in contemplation of the picture; in fact, the transition from one state to the other is inevitable and almost imperceptible. That the important factor in the process is the dream-consciousness of the painter may be perceived, I think, by comparing Giorgione with Perugino. The Umbrian could paint dreamers quite as well as Giorgione. His people long for nothing and aspire to nothing; they do not remember that to-day will eventually become yesterday and to-morrow to-day, and they have not learned that time is more hurried than eternity. If their thoughts turn heavenward it is merely because they find so little on earth to hold their attention, or because they find it so comfortable to believe in a being who can relieve them of so much responsibility and effort; they are neither religious nor irreligious but only incorrigible dreamers. Yet the pictures to which they give character fall far short of the tremendous æsthetic power of Giorgione's, and, while it would be unreasonable to attribute all of this difference to any one factor, I am sure that a large part of it arises from the fact that Giorgione was himself a dreamer while Perugino was only a shrewd, calculating business man who could never serve as guide to the dreamland which he was, in some mysterious fashion, able to create.

Giorgione's dream, too, was always about beauty—and especially about the wistfulness, the painfulness, or the perishability of beauty—and this greatly intensified its æsthetic power. (This dreaminess and wistfulness and passivity form, incidentally, the simplest test for the amateur who wishes to

learn to distinguish Giorgione from Titian; there are few if any Titians in which all three of these qualities can be found and few Giorgiones from which they are absent; they are his special heritage from the youth of the Renaissance.)

In most other arts this passive, receptive frame of mind would be out of place, except in an occasional work in which there were special conditions to justify it. Music, drama, dancing, and poetry all need vigorous storms, either emotional or creative, at frequent intervals. But painting is the quietest of all the arts, and at its best often suggests a still dark pool in a forest,—on which even a ripple counts as an imperfection. It is the art of all arts for the born dreamer, whether he be artist or spectator.

Giorgione's nearest rival as a dreamer in paint is Sodoma (Pl. 18). Dosso Dossi creates an atmosphere of mystery, and of faint unreality such as we feel in the Northern lights, which is often reminiscent of Giorgione, but his art is at most a conscious enchantment and never draws us into its depths like a dream. Corot is sometimes mistaken for a dreamer but he was in reality that more conscious type of artist whom we usually term poet. Metsu, strangely enough for a Dutchman, had not a little of that languor which is one of the chief ingredients of dreams, but there was not enough to overcome completely the prosiness and the utilitarianism which were his racial heritage. Sodoma was a true dreamer. His mind was like a screen on which images came and went, with a minimum of volition on his part. He seldom exercised any authority over his figures, in his capacity as their creator, unless it was to prevent any one of them from playing the tyrant over the others or trying to steal the center of the stage; if any power is exercised it is more likely to be their power over him. Into the finest of his forms he seems to sink with a rapt absorption which is comparable, I believe, to that of the religious mystics—although it contains an element of voluptuous ec-

stasy which is perhaps somewhat remote from their experience —and anyone who follows him through this experience becomes himself highly sensitized to many æsthetic values to which he might ordinarily remain inert. None of the other masters of the High Renaissance had just this gift; neither Raphael nor Titian nor Michelangelo, nor Giorgione himself, could lose himself so utterly in his own creations; their finest achievements are always restrained, composed, dictated, and never reach his pitch of freedom and spontaneity. He had passed beyond the limitations, the prejudices, the ambitions, and the taboos by which they were bound; and the freedom which he attained may be envisaged as one of the pinnacles toward which art had been slowly climbing, past one obstacle after another, for more than two hundred years, and on which it stood poised for a brief moment, freer than it had ever been and freer than it would be again until many centuries had passed. It was perhaps not the greatest, or even the most desirable of these pinnacles, any more than a leisure class is the greatest or most desirable product of a great civilization, but like a flourishing leisure class it is one of the surest signs that a climax in evolution has been attained. Sodoma's achievement has always been undervalued because so few of the generations which have followed him have been able to see beyond the reputation of playboy and drone with which Vasari branded him, or, if they have, have been free enough themselves to appreciate the degree of freedom which he had attained. Our own age is perhaps the first to understand that no one but an idler and a voluptuary could have climbed to this particular pinnacle, and that an ounce more of effort or of conscious purpose would have made the feat impossible.

Such an age might be expected to produce a dreamer of its own,—and we find him in Odilon Redon, a painter who is, if possible, even more passive than Sodoma. His forms are so fantastic, so disjointed, and so unreal that one, hardly able to

imagine that they are the natural product of his own dreams, begins to cast about for some mental opiate which might have caused them. He is essentially an Oriental: passive and languorous, living on dreams but turning to some artificial means of producing them instead of going to the trouble to evolve them out of his own consciousness, and demanding from them a certain luxury and mysticism which are not to be found in a normal life. Giorgione and Sodoma could dream endlessly over the most commonplace objects, but not Redon. The strangeness of his forms often suggests imagination and invention, but a fine imaginative work is hard and sparkling, like a diamond, while his have the gentle radiance of pearls and are as evanescent and intangible as a rainbow.

CONTEMPLATIVES

There is still another group of painters who resemble the dreamers in the serene, musical quality of their consciousness but who seem to be—speaking always comparatively—hardly creators at all, or even the passive mediums by means of which a new set of forms comes into existence, but merely the recorders of scenes in nature. They do, however, make us realize very strongly that we are not seeing nature directly but through their eyes; and this is due to the intentness with which they themselves have brooded over the scene.

We find one of the simplest examples of this type in Philippe de Champaigne. One seems to be looking at his figures through some medium which is extraordinarily pellucid yet at the same time imparts to them, as they pass through it, an indescribable charm; and one gradually grows aware that this medium is merely the consciousness of the artist. On the surface, Hals has a strong resemblance to Champaigne, but closer examination shows that he fails to give this impression of perfect clarity and that his pictures are, by com-

parison, somewhat fragmentary and patchy; and this difference, I believe, springs from the fact that his mind was analytic rather than contemplative. Rubens is related to Jordaens (Pls. 63, 64) somewhat as Hals is to Champaigne; both the lesser men, perhaps because they were obliged by the limitations of their talents to take their work more seriously, achieved a greater clarity and a greater unity; while the works of the unquestionably greater men seem just a little cloudy and disjointed.

An extraordinary unity marks the works of all the contemplatives. It is in the very nature of consciousness, and especially of the æsthetic consciousness, to make every act of perception include as many different items as possible—which means that they must all be seen as related parts of a single complex—and this assures some degree of unity in every work of art. Naturally, when consciousness is focussed long and intently on a single scene, as in the case of the contemplatives, the unity of the resulting work is greatly increased.

But we almost always perceive as well some more personal quality in the consciousness of the contemplative artist. In Whistler, Van der Weyden, Dirk Bouts, Crivelli (Pl. 60), and Van Dyck (Pl. 30), for example, it is an extreme sensitiveness to external impressions. They all achieve their results not so much by imposing their own arbitrary will on their materials and their medium as by sitting attentively at the feet of both and letting *them* dictate the picture.

Caravaggio's (Pl. 6) outstanding quality is his extraordinary power of contemplation. On first acquaintance his faces look rather cold and stony, but the best of them—which he distributes among his pictures as sparingly as Sodoma—are actually as deep and dark and somber as a cave and, except for their intense, wordless meditations, as empty; they seem to stare out into infinite space with the immobility of a marble mask.

But anyone who once succeeds in forgetting their coldness and loses himself completely in their dark immensities will undergo one of the most astonishing experiences which painting affords, for no one can foresee in advance that anything so hard and so empty will be able to carry him so far and so fast toward the most exhilarating heights of æsthetic experience.

Piero della Francesca's grasp of the world he depicts (Pl. 58) is vast and buoyant. His consciousness might be compared to an ocean of mercury, on which various ponderous forms float like silver ingots—and are drawn together by the surface tension into a single compact mass. One feels that however great the tumult on the surface—and in the *Resurrection* it is very great—the massive depth below will never be shaken by it; and on this massiveness and this buoyancy we float very easily out of the world of practical relations into the open sea of æsthetic experience.

Rembrandt, though he is more creative than most of the contemplatives, belongs with them by virtue of the power with which his consciousness grips and holds whatever it undertakes to deal with. It is probably, all things considered, the greatest consciousness which has found expression in painting. Its variety alone would make it remarkable: sometimes it is tremulously sensitive as in the *Disciples at Emmaus,* sometimes cool and impersonal as in the *School of Anatomy* (Pl. 9), sometimes grandly tempestuous as in the *Resurrection* (Pl. 15)—and the list might be extended almost indefinitely. But the quality which distinguishes Rembrandt's consciousness most clearly from all others is its comprehensiveness. It is not comprehensive in the Terborchian sense, filling out every subject it touches until its surface becomes seamless and perfectly smooth,—for many subjects that Terborch would have rendered in velvet turn under Rembrandt's hands into a sort of coarse tweed; and it is not comprehensive as Ford Madox Brown is comprehensive, for Rembrandt never probes into

the hidden quirks and corners of a subject; his comprehensiveness is merely the ability to understand, broadly and deeply and thoroughly, whatever his mind may happen to encounter. It is not precisely an intellectual understanding, although he was a keen analyst and had a habit of viewing his subject from many sides, and still less is it what is commonly known as understanding with the heart, although he was deeply, if not warmly, sympathetic, but it is a magnificent intermediary type of understanding in which the wisdom of one is fertilized by the emotion of the other. He has often been called a philosopher but a philosopher relies more on systematic, deliberate thought and is more interested in abstractions; Ruisdael was a philosopher, but not Rembrandt. He was simply a man with a consciousness capacious enough to contain the whole of any subject that might be presented to it and sensitive enough to respond to a great variety of its aspects. It was an intuitive rather than an intellectual or a reflective consciousness; in him, as Stevenson said in another connection, understanding outran knowledge. To look at the world through his eyes for a time broadens one's own consciousness immeasurably; and this broadening has quite as high an æsthetic value as the intensification of consciousness of which we have spoken in earlier chapters. And in addition he has the true contemplative's faculty of dwelling on a subject until he has, as it were, dissolved it completely in his mind and given it thereby a power of combining with other minds which it never possessed in its original state.

"To look at the world for a time through the painter's eyes" is a phrase which gives, I believe, a better clue to the true nature of the art of painting than any other that could be devised. The lesser arts, such as pottery, try to create objects which will be beautiful in themselves,—that is to say, which will affect our sense of beauty directly and will invoke nothing outside themselves; painting, however, tends to direct its

efforts toward showing not so much that a given object is beautiful as that *someone, namely the artist, found it beautiful.* It is not primarily the thing itself that the artist is trying to show us but his own reaction to it. What he is really trying to make of his picture is a magic incantation for enabling us, for a brief space, actually to see through his eyes and to feel with his emotions. Under the spell of a great picture we become for a time, as far as it is humanly possible, a sort of replica of the artist himself, and this method of working gives him a tremendous advantage over the potter. The potter can appeal only to the limited æsthetic powers with which we have been endowed by nature, but the painter proceeds to endow us anew with his own infinitely stronger and more sensitive ones and to key his work to them. The great picture, therefore, is not merely more beautiful than its lesser competitors, in a strictly physical sense; its greatest superiority lies in its greater power to lift us above our normal plane of perception and feeling into a gloriously exhilarating one which we could never have reached by our own unaided efforts. It transforms us, in other words, into something immeasurably greater than our normal selves, and that is the great secret of its power over us.

SCIENCE AND ART

When we are speaking of the lower manifestations of art science must perhaps be regarded as an enemy, for it cools our emotions and makes us more critical of everything that is presented to us; but as soon as we begin to view art as primarily a manifestation of consciousness we must look on science with a more friendly eye, for it is unquestionably the greatest stimulus which has been applied to human consciousness since the revival of classical learning and the age of geographical discovery. In so far as we are more sensitive

than our forefathers to the world around us, or more able to grasp a multiplicity of things as a single complex unit or to penetrate beneath their superficial differences to the hidden forces which bind them firmly together, the credit belongs almost wholly to science. And, still more important for the development of art, it has given us that renewed interest in life and the world that supports it which is the only sort of soil from which great art can ever spring. It is too early to contend that the portraits of Sargent and Augustus John, for example, are greater than those of Holbein and Piero della Francesca, but they do possess the unmistakable advantage of a much greater alertness and flexibility in the perceptions of the artist, which later ages will value more highly than we are able to, and this must be credited in large measure to the all-around sharpening of human perceptions which has resulted from the extraordinary growth of science in the last four or five hundred years. And when we add to this already large debt of art to science the new theories of color and of vision, and the new discoveries in æsthetics and in the art of primitive and of prehistoric peoples, which have contributed so much to the recent evolution of painting, and estimate the value of science as an irritant for arousing people of artistic temperament to violent æsthetic activity by way of protest against its supposedly cold materialism, it grows more and more difficult to imagine what the art of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries would have become without its help—and still harder to guess at the heights to which it may push art in the next four or five hundred years.

CHAPTER XX

EMOTION

THE ÆSTHETIC VALUE OF EMOTION

Emotion in its simplest form differs no more from contemplation than the first flush of color in the morning sky does from the gray light that precedes it. In Watteau's wistfulness, for example, there is only a hint more of personal feeling than in Champaigne's attitude of pure contemplation. Yet there is enough to give color and warmth to all the meanings that we read off from his forms, and to deepen and enrich them. The chief function of emotion in art is to add color to one's impression of the artist's personality.

Unfortunately, many people have acquired a greatly exaggerated idea of the place of emotion in art, and some even go so far as to believe that the whole end and purpose of art may be described as the expression of emotion. Of art as an end in itself such people have no notion; for them it is always subsidiary to emotion—a bank in which emotion can be deposited, a disk on which it can be recorded, or in an instrument through which it can be transmitted. This belief is the source of a great deal of the sentimentality with which art has always been infected.

If I have not convinced the reader in the previous chapters that the expression of emotion is not the sole, or even the chief, end of art I can hardly hope to do so in a paragraph or two at this stage of the argument, but it may be worth while to point out that art cannot subordinate itself to anything whatsoever and still remain art, in the fullest and highest sense of the word. It may be a pleasing and a useful art, like

decoration, but it will have renounced some part of its full heritage. Art may use emotion for its own ends in bountiful quantities, but if it subordinates itself to emotion it becomes merely a medium of communication between the artist and his public, by means of which he can tell them what he happened to feel about this or that,—that is to say, merely one of the practical utilities of everyday life. That complete detachment from practicality which we have found to be one of its most vital æsthetic organs is gone. We feel this occasionally in Burne-Jones (Pl. 49). His wistfulness is much more poignant than Watteau's and often breaks out into keen sympathy for the human figures he creates, so that one suspects him of forgetting for a moment, in his eagerness to convert the public to an equal sympathy for humanity, that he is engaged in creating a work of art rather than in delivering a message. There are traces of a similar defect in Goya, Blake, Millet, Hogarth, and Watts.

But the value of emotion in art outweighs the special dangers it introduces. It is an emotion oftener than not that first incites the artist to undertake the laborious task of composition, and, after he has begun, keeps him continuously supplied with motive power. It feeds into the work as it grows under his hands many strands of his personality which in any colder or more passive state of mind would not be drawn into the creative process, and, by virtue of its power and its intensity, raises them all to a high degree of unity. Finally, when the work is completed the emotion which it contains attracts the public, stirs it deeply, and leads it quickly into the heart of the picture.

It is in part the familiarity of emotion which makes the public cling to it so tightly in art: it is like meeting a fellow-townsman in a foreign land. But this has bred a great many misunderstandings, for emotion, used as a general term, does not mean quite the same in art as it does in everyday life

and does not operate at all as the average man expects it to.

In the first place, many of the familiar emotions which help to make up the general meaning of the term must be discarded because they never enter into painting, at least as part of the artist's mental attitude. I doubt whether any picture was ever inspired, for example, by fear, shame, jealousy, disgust, rage, or despair; and there are many other emotions which can enter into the creative process only in minute quantities. Painting, in its capacity for expressing emotion, lies between the abstract, impersonal, and emotionally vague art of architecture and the intense and extremely emotional art of music. It can express a somewhat greater variety of emotions than sculpture and present them somewhat more vividly, but it is not, in the common sense of the word, a strikingly emotional art.

In the second place, the emotion does not, as most people believe, produce the work of art directly and unaided. The emotion flames up in the artist's mind, and as it cools there comes a desire to embody it, for one reason or another, in a work of art; and it is this desire rather than the original emotion which takes command of the production of the picture. The original emotion is only the theme around which the completed work is built, or the key in which, for the sake of unity, it is composed. Few raw emotions would last long enough to complete a picture unless they were artificially kept alive by some very powerful desire which had found a use for them. The painter may at times continue to feel the original emotion until the picture is finished but this is not necessary, any more than it is necessary for an actor to feel deeply every emotion which he presents on the stage; whether he does so or not is entirely a matter of temperament or of chance. All that is necessary is that he shall be able to create an impression of feeling it.

In the third place, emotion counts for much less in painting

than is generally supposed, serving as flavor rather than as substance. The sympathy of Burne-Jones, the satire of Goya, and the deep respect of Millet for all humanity are mainly surface-phenomena, which have comparatively little effect on the underlying structures of color, line, and mass. Botticelli's sympathy proves on analysis to be not so much sympathy as an unusual gift for understanding human nature; what we interpret as sympathy is, to a considerable extent, only a habit of stating the case for each of his characters more fully and more fairly than is common among painters; he is, in other words, not a lyric but a dramatic painter, who relies more on his powers of creation than on his powers of feeling. Even in pictures as intensely emotional as Angelico's (Pl. 14), Blake's, and Greco's the greater part of the æsthetic value rests on the ordinary, unemotional elements; emotion is hardly more than the flavor which makes them particularly attractive to our palates.

THE VALUE OF ÆSTHETIC EMOTION

The greater part of the emotion which finds expression in painting is either purely æsthetic in character or approximately so. For example, the emotions of the three painters just mentioned are mainly religious,—and religion shares with dreaming and with falling in love the honor of being very closely related, psychologically, to æsthetic enjoyment. In the religious mood as in the æsthetic mood one is almost wholly detached from material affairs, one tends to see details always as an integral part of some greater whole, and one is prepared, in Fromentin's phrase, to find the invisible expressed by means of the visible. Either mood serves as an excellent preparation for the other,—though there is a hidden antagonism between them which sometimes makes the transition difficult.

When the emotion which we attribute to the artist is purely æsthetic, when he seems to be filled with delight in the thing he is painting or overflowing with the joy of artistic creation, its æsthetic value for us rises still higher. Instead of offering, like ordinary emotions, so many tangents on which our thoughts can shoot off out of the picture it invariably swings them back into it, just as a good composition on the material plane keeps one's eyes within the frame instead of allowing them to wander away from it. And in addition it carries us very far into the personality of the artist and helps greatly to make us see the work not coldly as a mere spectator but from the inside, through the medium of the artist's own mind. We may study the first tremors of these emotions in Mantegna (Pl. 50); in Bouts and Cranach they are considerably stronger; and in Fragonard and Lorenzo Monaco (Pl. 47) they are fairly exuberant.

In Van Gogh it is not so much *pleasure* in creation that we feel as a savage hunger for it,—an irresistible desire, or rather necessity, to produce picture after picture, which make, such men as Gérôme and Alma-Tadema seem like pampered kittens beside him,—but this also possesses æsthetic value.

The warmth of Benozzo's delight in art was cooled somewhat by his profound respect for it, but this does not necessarily imply an æsthetic loss. Up to a certain point every sacrifice of emotional warmth for an attitude of idealism and detachment yields a clear advantage, for these qualities are much rarer and more difficult to attain than mere warmth and their æsthetic value is very great. What would Angelico be, as an artist, without his humble reverence, or Ingres minus his cold pride and his consciousness of his own sincerity, or Velasquez stripped of his courtly personal dignity?

All these emotions are more or less common to all craftsmen; there are others which are peculiar to painters,

which no other medium is capable of yielding or of recording. They do not stand out boldly on the surface of a picture; no one can read them at sight, and no inexperienced person can read them at all; they are like the hieroglyphics of an unknown language, which have to be deciphered a character at a time, with the help of all of one's previous æsthetic experience. It is almost impossible to describe them in words; one can only work one's way toward them through the simpler types of æsthetic expression, trusting to the sensitiveness thus developed to detect them.

It is through these painter's-emotions, I think, that one gets the first full, clear view of the supreme function of personality in art, which is the integration within a single meaning of all the divergent and almost incompatible elements which enter into it,—line, mass, color, light, texture, movement, meanings, composition, and all the rest. Personality achieves a much stronger and more comprehensive unity between the various parts of a picture than mere material composition possibly can; it is a sort of fourth dimension for painting in which various feats of this sort, which would be little short of miraculous if accomplished by pure composition, can be turned out with almost no effort. In the records of a personality we can read not merely what the artist actually did accomplish, in strictly material terms, but also everything that he hoped to accomplish, and much of it counts as strongly as if he had actually done it. And the purpose, the efforts, and the emotions which we see recorded in his work, because they rise so far above the visible elements in which they are expressed and because they treat these elements only as means to a single end, impress on them a very powerful unity. The personality of a great painter runs through his work in a strong, orderly pattern, as the lines of force that radiate from a magnet run through a mass of iron filings and impose their own form on it.

I believe there are more of these painter's-emotions in Titian than in any other painter, and that they make up a large part of all the emotion that is to be found in his pictures. In his lesser pictures he sometimes indulged, like other painters, in the definite, familiar emotions of everyday life, but into his greater masterpieces he put more of the painter than of the man. Here one can seldom detect any of the strictly practical attitudes toward life: one basks in the soft radiance of a consciousness which has no purpose except to bathe everything it touches with warmth and light, and which does it all without visible effort. Sometimes it suggests those vague, underlying masses of bodily sensation which supply the basic tone in every conscious experience, and sometimes the vast undulating surface of a sunlit sea; at one moment it is as stimulating as a salty breeze, and at the next as relaxing as a warm bath: it is a sort of artistic dialectic in which everything is perpetually being reconciled with its opposite and united with it to form some third thing which is different from either. The experience which it offers us is ever-changing, and probably inexhaustible. Titian's consciousness is neither as comprehensive as Rembrandt's nor as sharply focussed, and perhaps not as intensely *conscious,* but it represents a warmer, more emotional, more mysterious, and more elemental life. It neither judges nor reflects on what is presented to it but devotes itself wholly to the pleasure of perceiving things and transposing them into paint. It is perhaps because it avoids so successfully all the bypaths which tempt the feet of lesser painters, and gives itself wholly and purely to the creation of works of art in the single medium of paint, that it seems to offer us a more harmonious combination of all the elements which can enter into a picture than any other consciousness which has turned to paint as its medium of expression.

POETRY AND PROSE

The whole subject of emotion in painting would be much clearer if it were possible to distinguish here, as in literature, between poetry and prose. As it is, some of us expect every painting that we encounter to assay 100% poetry while others always expect 100% prose, and this exposes both types of spectators to an endless series of disappointments, for some paintings fall in one group and some in the other.

The realists, for example, are more interested in recording exactly what they see in nature than in either expressing their own emotions or making a beautiful work of art; and this makes their painting the purest sort of prose, for one of the most fundamental distinctions between prose and poetry is that prose, in general, is a means to some other end while poetry is an end in itself. This is not, of course, an absolute distinction but represents the strongest tendencies in both types. The name realist serves after a fashion as a designation for Manet, Hals, Piero della Francesca, Constable, Velasquez, and the rest, but would it not be better to describe them simply as prose painters?—which does not imply in the least that they never produced any beautifully poetic passage, but only that their minds turned predominantly toward prose. We should thus take advantage of an important distinction which has already been established in another art and, at the same time, make clear their relationship to all the other non-poetic painters, who are now, thanks to our inveterate habit of approaching art always from the historical point of view, masquerading under the heterogeneous names which happened to be applied to them at the moment of their appearance on the scene,—such as Tenebrists, Naturalists, Dutch School, Impressionists, and the like—which seldom convey more than a hint of this important distinction. It is particu-

larly important to make this distinction in painting because there is no convention of form, as in literature, which enables us to tell immediately which type of work we are looking at.

It is not generally recognized, I think, how many of the most characteristically modern painters have been masters of prose rather than of poetry. I mean especially what the Germans call *Tendenz*-painters, the men who paint primarily to expound or to illustrate an æsthetic theory. Few of the outstanding revolutionaries of the last half-century seem to have painted from pure delight in art, or to create beauty, or to give vent to emotions which demanded expression. Their incentive to paint has usually been some novel theory of art in which they felt, by right of discovery, a strong proprietary interest and which they desired to impose on the world at large. Cézanne, for example, became so absorbed in the practically insoluble problems he had set himself that he turned into the heaviest and most solemn of painters, surpassing even Masaccio and Piero della Francesca—who were also theorists and problem-solvers—in ponderous gravity. Theory hung heavily over Manet and Monet, and not even Renoir, Degas, and Matisse escaped wholly from its depressing influence. Gauguin and Van Gogh were the only men of marked originality in that generation who show any evidence of having painted from a pure love of painting. And who among the newest generation of painters could pass for either blithe or jovial? I believe that theory in excess is a more destructive force in art than illustrative meaning in any of its forms,—with the possible exception of sentimentality. It fills a larger place in consciousness during the process of creation, is more rebellious and domineering, makes heavier demands on the growing picture, cramps it, warps it, and in the end turns it into very heavy prose. Nevertheless, since theory seems to be, in certain ages, the one thing that makes palatable the small quantity of art which an intellectual, sophisticated, serious-minded public is able to take

into its system, it must be given an established place in the hierarchy of art,—but let these expository pictures be labeled "Prose" very clearly, to call attention to the fact that they are created not as an end in themselves but as an incident in the realization of some ulterior purpose.

Most people in a picture-gallery are looking for poetry rather than for prose; and the special conditions which govern the art greatly encourage the production of poetry. The dimensions of most pictures are small, and in any art a limitation of space favors an intensive method of cultivation,—or, in other words, a poetic rather than a prosaic treatment of the available area. The fact that under proper conditions we tend to pore over each picture for a long time instead of reading it through quickly and passing to the next is another influence working in the same direction. And the comparative freedom which the painter enjoys from the various practical, utilitarian demands which are made on the writer enables him to turn his hand to pure poetry whenever his inspiration calls for poetic expression,—and the general recognition of this greater freedom stimulates the natural demand for poetic painting. It is certainly the poetry of painting rather than its prose—the lyrics of Botticelli, the tender hymns of Raphael and of Francia, the folksongs of Spitzweg, and the one sublime epic of Michelangelo rather than the more labored studies of Masaccio, Caravaggio, Manet, and Cézanne—which holds first place in the hearts of the public. Prose may be more readable and have a more friendly and familiar air, but when the average man turns to art he expects it to give him not the thing he is accustomed to but art, and for him art means poetry and not prose.

Yet the connoisseur in painting can find a great deal of pleasure in the fine artistry of its prose. Painted prose is likely to be cool, simple, direct, well-poised, and competent, and it often surpasses poetic painting in a certain detachment,

or mental distance from the subject, or contemplative perspective which is an important ingredient in all art. Brouwer, Degas, Moroni, Zurbaran, and Velasquez are all prose painters and they hold their own very well with their more poetic rivals.

CHAPTER XXI

CREDIT

CREDIT IN ART

Joy in creation is not the only relation between a painter and his picture which may be read from its forms, nor the only one which affects our pleasure in them. When we have entered deeply into the personality of a painter many things in it which were at first insignificant, or even imperceptible, become vital factors in our enjoyment,—just as things which we overlook entirely in an acquaintance may cause us great joy or sorrow when we discover them in a friend. Especially important are the various signs which reveal the painter's attitude toward his work. These may became either powerful intensifiers of our pleasure in it or serious obstacles to this pleasure.

The laws which govern this phenomenon resemble closely those which govern the granting of credit in business. It is not the special ability of either the business man or the artist in his own vocation which attracts the extra allotment, of money or of appreciation, that comes to him, but certain qualities which belong to the man as a whole and which he would probably display in any vocation. They are commonly summed up under the general name of character. For example, if two pictures which seem equally beautiful prove to have been painted, one by a sincere artist and the other by a flippant one, the work of the sincere man will from thenceforth give us much more pleasure than the other. Sincerity alone, of course, cannot produce a good picture any more than a fine moral character can make a good business man

out of an unsystematic spendthrift, but when added to a sufficient competence with the brush it adds greatly to our pleasure in a painter's work.

LOSS OF CREDIT

We usually notice first, however, the qualities which destroy this æsthetic credit,—the various failures of the artist to give himself as completely as he might to his work. (Incidentally, the completeness with which a few such failures destroy our interest in a man's pictures affords one more proof of the supreme importance of personality in art.)

Any one of a great variety of defects may occasion such a loss of credit. Guido Reni, for instance, did not *create* unless he was obliged to but depended on a set of standard recipes. (He once boasted that he knew a hundred ways of painting a face turned up to heaven.) His pictures, with a few brilliant exceptions, are not art at all but a sort of patchwork of ready-made bits. Our ideal of art demands that every work shall be a wholly new creation from the ground up, and any artist whom we catch slighting this demand and trying to fob off on us some partly machine-made product can no longer be taken seriously.

Raphael and Greuze lose credit by showing themselves altogether too anxious to please. It is not as serious a defect as Guido's, but it is a very disturbing one none the less. In art as in life we instinctively distrust the man who goes too far out of his way to be agreeable. And in art, in particular, he denies us the very thing we desire most,—the unique and original personality of the artist. We find his picture unusually agreeable and, excited by the prospect of discovering a new and especially congenial artistic consciousness, probe quickly into its depths,—to encounter only a clever, volatile mind engaged not in revealing its own thoughts and character

but in guessing what we ourselves are like and what sort of art we shall probably enjoy most. It is a confusing and disappointing experience, which destroys much of our admiration for the painter who subjects us to it.

Greuze also illustrates, by his handling of sex, another way of losing credit. Great masters, such as Titian, Correggio, and Giorgione, can incorporate highly erotic material in their pictures so perfectly that it stays firmly in place. It would be too much to claim that they can force everyone who looks at such pictures to see them invariably as art and never as mere sex, but it is at least safe to say that no one who has attained a certain degree of experience in art and in life will have any great difficulty in maintaining a strictly artistic attitude toward them. It is not so with Greuze,—nor with Giulio Romano, nor the Van der Werffs, nor the multitude of modern painters who turn out salon and saloon pictures by the dozen. Realizing, perhaps, their weakness as painters, they introduce into their pictures just enough raw sex to tempt the public and hold it. Greuze made some pretense of treating sex artistically (Pl. 32), but it deceives only the injudicious. Fragonard, who used much more dangerous material in a bolder fashion and never descended to pretense, is from a strictly æsthetic point of view much less reprehensible because his eroticism lies so frankly on the surface that one can leave it behind as one penetrates more deeply into the picture, just as one leaves behind the show-window when one enters a store. But Greuze's works are so thoroughly and so insidiously permeated with sex that, even though it is sex of a more innocent variety, it is much harder to leave behind or to forget.

The problem of keeping sex in its place does not differ in kind, but only in degree, from the problem of keeping other emotions in their place, or from the problem of painting fruit so that it will not make the spectator too hungry to enjoy the picture as art. If sex is harder to manage it is only because

it is a more powerful and a more rebellious force, which is much more likely than hunger to make the average person forget that he is supposed to be looking at a work of art.

Still other painters forfeit credit by devoting too much of their art to a display of their own virtuosity. The modern expressionists display their thoughts and feelings instead of their virtuosity, but the result is the same,—a subordination of art to some ulterior purpose. It still remains art, of a sort, but since we can imagine art of a purer sort it does not wholly satisfy us.

Affectation is, rather surprisingly, a less serious fault in art than in life; it seldom undermines the æsthetic structure to any dangerous extent, and is at the worst a species of over-ornamentation. In the case of Botticelli and Van der Weyden it even seems to enrich the personality of the artist by exhibiting him as the possessor of a very sensitive form of self-consciousness, and in Crivelli (Pl. 60) it seems no more than a species of psychological ornament. In Filippino Lippi it is not affectation that distresses us, although it is always present in profusion, but flippancy and superficiality.

Indifference and neglect, on the other hand, prove to be unexpectedly serious defects. The light-fingered, clever-minded Fragonard, for example, was always inclined to play at art, for it was not a thing which the favorite of a frivolous society could afford to take too seriously, and in consequence whenever one looks too long at a time at his enchanting confections of form and color they go down, like other kinds of froth. Luini, though he was a more solid painter than Fragonard, never gave himself completely to his art but patronized it a little, toyed with it a little, pretended that he was more naïve about it than he ever could have been, and used it as a framework for various conceits and diversions which have little to do either with art or with his subject matter; and for all of this he has paid heavily in loss of credit.

In none of these cases are we dealing with a moral judgment

but solely with an æsthetic one. We do not condemn a picture because we disapprove of the morals of the artist, but condemn his morals because we disapprove of his picture. And we disapprove of the picture solely because it is æsthetically imperfect, because it balks us of some fundamental æsthetic reaction which we are entitled to expect, or fails to act on us as it should. The fact that this imperfection is due to a defect in the artist which we should call in practical life a moral defect is purely a coincidence. The sum and substance of the whole matter is this: we value personality more than anything else in art, and if an artist cheats us of that we are inclined to undervalue everything else that he has achieved.

GRANTING OF CREDIT

Similarly, of course, when an artist throws more of himself into his work than we expect our pleasure in the rest of his achievement is greatly increased. But here as elsewhere in art no sharp dividing line can be drawn, for what we expect in the way of personality varies greatly, according to temperament and experience. A novice may grow enthusiastic over the slightest trace of personality, while a connoisseur may be immune to all but its most stirring manifestations.

Yet there are many types of relationship between an artist and his work of which it is safe to say that they will stir at least a majority of the public to a liberal outpouring of æsthetic credit. The lightness and sureness with which Teniers laid on each brush-stroke is always exhilarating, and so is Guardi's playfulness; and they heighten appreciably our pleasure in the other aspects of their pictures. The easy-going manner in which Pintoricchio set about his work—which differs widely from indifference and neglect—and the mellow humor with which Hogarth (Pl. 82) looked on the world when he took his brush in hand (it was only when he worked with

the sharp tools of an engraver that his temperament became acid) both predispose us in favor of their more strictly æsthetic virtues, for high spirits and good nature do not lose all their contagion even when they have to be transmitted through a medium as quiescent as paint. Steen was debonair, and Hals and Brouwer (Pl. 81) swaggered a bit with the brush; they are the Three Musketeers of painting, and thrill us like the heroes of Dumas' tale. Carpaccio (Pl. 59) somehow managed to camouflage his deep interest in painting as a blithe unconcern about its success, and his deceptive air of improvising everything as he goes along creates an atmosphere of great charm in which all his other virtues bloom and flourish.

Ordinary self-confidence has some value as a means of securing credit, just as it does in the business world. Rubens is a notable example of its efficacy. Many of the greater painters—notably Titian, Velasquez, Dürer, Raphael, and Moretto, as well as Rubens,—seem to address their pictures not to some solitary spectator but to a great world-audience, and I believe that their boldness in doing so plays a considerable part in convincing us of their æsthetic merit. Yet I am still surer that the man who paints for himself alone, with no thought for either the size or the character of his audience, will in the end win more of our confidence than any merely oratorical painter ever can. Blake, Twachtman, and Cézanne, working out their own concepts of art and beauty uninfluenced by any thought of popularity or applause, are able to draw from us such unlimited credit that we consent to judge them not so much on what they actually accomplished as on the original visions to which they tried to give material form. Even the lesser loneliness of Greco, Lotto, and Botticelli gives them an air of sincerity which is of inestimable æsthetic value. The pictures of Signorelli and Ford Madox Brown are quoted at more than par because these artists possessed in a supreme degree the gift of pouring themselves

without reserve into their work; it is impossible to resist a personality that seems to rush toward us in such torrents. The intensity of Van Gogh acts on us in much the same fashion.

Since Schiller, a great deal has been said about the relationship of art to play and very little about its relationship to work, but in the last generation or two this poorer, cast-off relative has been resuming its rightful place in the family. With each year that passes we care more for the Signorellis and the Mantegnas of painting, to whom art seemed the most important thing in life, worthy of all the thought and labor that could be expended on it, and less and less for the Raphaels and Rubenses, to whom it was little more than an agreeable trade. Patience, earnestness, and thoroughness, as we find them in Cuyp, Homer Martin (Pl. 76), and Masaccio, have become the best advertisements that an artist can employ to draw serious attention to his work.

Earnestness has helped the primitives to a place in our favor, but I think that their naïveté has done even more for them. We are so sure that they are not trying to "put anything over on us" that we can lower most of the defenses which we feel obliged to maintain in our intercourse with other human beings, either in life or in art, and give ourselves whole-heartedly to enjoyment. It is not so much their individual merits as our own sure sense of superiority which gives them their privileged position in our hearts. We play with them as we do with children.

In Michelangelo, and to a lesser extent in Piero della Francesca, it is the addition of great power to a genuine earnestness which commands an almost inexhaustible supply of credit. When we entrust ourselves to their pictures we find ourselves supported by a vast underlying buoyancy which obviates much of the strain and effort that must be spent in grasping the works of weaker men, and everything, accordingly, counts for more than its normal value. In Ingres (Pl.

34), the incorruptible artistic conscience of the man simply annihilates, one by one, all our minor doubts and criticisms and dissatisfactions and greatly intensifies the æsthetic worth of whatever it permits him to give us. It looms up among his other qualities—and among the qualities of most other painters—with the stern, rigid, lonely beauty of an iceberg or of the Matterhorn.

Yet a painter need not be endowed with these positive, dominating qualities in order to secure a liberal supply of credit. Bellini (Pl. 51) is neither an intense painter nor an earnest one, in any active sense of the word; but there is a sublime stillness in his finest pictures which suggest the silence and the serenity of a cloudless sky, and we sink into it with a sense of infinite peace and restfulness and childlike trust. There are no counter-currents, such as are set up by the impetuosity of a Michelangelo or a Tintoretto, to disturb the great calm which reigns here. Bellini's soul seems to be lifted as high as the sky above all the worries, distractions, resentments, and ambitions which trouble the existence of ordinary men; there is no other painter who makes it so easy and so simple to detach oneself completely from all the turmoil of practical affairs,—which are apt to cling to us like thorns when we embark on some æsthetic adventure and spoil our pleasure. Like the primitives, he makes his effect not so much by inspiring us or by commanding our respect as by completely disarming us and soothing us into a state of æsthetic rapture. He is so transparent, so guileless, and so tranquil that he captivates us as no merely material beauty ever can. Teniers, Guardi, Pintoricchio, and Carpaccio are all remotely related to him on this side of his nature, but the distance which separates them is immeasurable. Francia is perhaps as placid, but he is heavier, shallower, and not so limpidly sure. Piero della Francesca is stronger, but his strength only serves to disturb the massive, immobile calm which might otherwise be

comparable to Bellini's. Moretto exhibits a smooth, spacious gravity which sometimes suggests Bellini, but much of it is obviously only a skilfully composed "bedside manner," and the genuine remainder loses a great deal of its virtue by being adulterated with the substitute. Velasquez, Ruisdael, and Dürer are perhaps his truest rivals,—the first two by virtue of their gravity and poise, and the third through his clear intelligence and his capacity for thought,—but neither of them can seriously challenge his luminous serenity. He is a Buddha among painters.

CHAPTER XXII

PERSONALITY

THE EXPRESSION OF PERSONALITY

In the end, after studying a number of limited aspects of the painter,—after seeing him as a creative force, as an inventor, as a personified emotion, and then as someone in whom we can repose confidence,—we arrive at a point at which we begin to see him clearly as a whole. To this point every line in the picture leads as surely as rivers lead to the sea; it is the ultimate fact in painting. From below it may seem as remote, and even irrelevant, as the summit of a mountain, —but this is merely because it *is* the summit. If our age has tended to ignore personality and to confer its favor on a more objective, more materialistic type of art it is only because most of our contacts with art are too hurried and too superficial to permit us to extract from it its subtlest flavors. We must not mistake the preferences of a man who is accustomed to gulp his food for the fundamental laws of taste.

The arts differ greatly in their ability to receive the impress of a creative personality; some are stone and others wax. Architecture and sculpture, which have to be executed in heavy, massive materials, are the least sensitive, and music, painting, and literature, whose mediums are exceedingly light and flexible, are the most so. It is generally held that painting lags behind literature in this respect but I doubt whether this is true. Literature can, of course, reproduce all the shades and ramifications of a man's thought, and even the rhythm with which it flows through his brain, as painting cannot,—but so can a telephone, yet a glance at a photograph of a man

one has never met will usually give a clearer idea of him than a number of long conversations over the telephone. A topographical map, likewise, can exhibit certain aspects of the region it covers with a clarity which a hundred volumes of written description can never equal. Maps, photographs, and paintings alike have several decided advantages over words: they can present a great variety of facts simultaneously and in practically the same order in which they occur in nature, and can reproduce the essentials of their appearance very closely, while words can depict only a limited number of facts very vaguely and in the order determined by the laws of grammar. And naturally the medium which permits the most complete record of nature will also be the one that gives the fullest portrait of the artist, for in it departures from nature will be most numerous and most obvious, and it is in these departures, voluntary or otherwise, that the personality of the artist records itself. I believe that anyone could learn to know Botticelli and Correggio, through their works alone, as well as he could Shelley and Shakespeare.

Different personalities, however, vary as much in their adaptability to expression in a given art as the various arts do in their capacity to express them. In their ordinary human life Teniers, Netscher, Gérôme, and Ghirlandajo may possibly have seemed as colorful and picturesque as Botticelli, Brouwer, Memlinc, and Goya, and it is conceivable that in some other art they might have achieved a more striking portrayal of their personalities, but in painting they are hardly more than colorless automatons. In some cases this lack of color must be charged to the personality itself; in others, to lack of sufficient skill with the brush to express anything but the most obvious facts; but in others it is always due to some fundamental incompatibility between the personality to be expressed and the medium through which it must be done.

In this involuntary portraiture, just as in the more formal

type, there are many ways in which an effect of full individuality may be achieved. Since most of us embark on the business of judging pictures with the critical equipment that we have acquired from literature we are likely in the beginning to value a detailed autobiography most highly. In this field there is no one who can compare with Benozzo Gozzoli. Other painters have left more concentrated and more impressive records of themselves, but there is nothing quite like this naïve, rambling, colorful revelation of a proud and picturesque spirit. By the time one has visited, and studied carefully, his various groups of frescoes one knows him circumstantially and completely, in all his pride, his fierceness, his mordant humor, his deep reverence for art, and his fine imagination. He is, in short, the Montaigne of painting.

Carpaccio sometimes rouses one's hopes as an autobiographer, for he has the necessary naïveté and a great gift for narration, but he was less intense than Benozzo as a personality and more careless and superficial as a painter, and he was never allotted such vast spaces, nor such a range of subjects, in which to write himself down. There are a number of other painters whom we seem to know in considerable detail, but in the majority of cases this knowledge will be found to have come from tales that their contemporaries recorded about them rather than from what they themselves have unconsciously put down in paint.

But a portrait, as we observed in Chapter VIII, need not always be detailed in order to be good. The figure of Frans Hals that we build up from his pictures contains a minimum of detail yet it stands out boldly in the round, as impressive as any similar figure in painting. Fra Angelico, who is surely one of the most personal of all painters, is really little more, as we see him in his works, than a personification of piety. And even the tremendously imposing Piero della Francesca reveals nothing of himself except his powerful will and his

profound consciousness; no one could possibly guess from his pictures, as one can from Benozzo's, the quirks and traits of character which endeared him to his friends and gave color to his everyday life. All that is needed to fulfill the various æsthetic functions which our concept of the artist's personality serves is some distinctly personal flavor which permeates all the forms in a picture as thoroughly as beauty itself,—and can, on occasion, supplant beauty as the dominant, all-pervading meaning of a composition.

The finest of these portraits extend beyond the limits of a single picture, requiring for their completion the whole of a man's life-work. One knows Rubens or Tiepolo no better after seeing a hundred of their pictures than after six, but it is very different with Botticelli. Each new picture from his hand adds some new detail to his character or reveals it in a new light. The passionately religious painter of the *Nativity* is a very different man from the wide-eyed, poetic youth who painted the *Madonna with Six Saints* in the Uffizi, and it requires some little effort to connect either of them smoothly with the man who painted *Pallas and the Centaur* and the *Birth of Venus*. In fact, it is as hard to construct a fixed, wholly satisfactory portrait of him as it is with Hamlet; he is one man in Florence and another in Rome, and still another in London, and by the time one has revised his portrait according to the data in the galleries of Berlin, Munich, and Vienna one feels the necessity of returning to Florence to begin it all over again. It is an endlessly fascinating problem. There is a certain pleasure in renewing acquaintance with a Rubens or a Tiepolo in picture after picture—for encountering a familiar meaning in a succession of new forms is a source of pleasure here as elsewhere—but sooner or later, like every pleasure that is based chiefly on recognition, it begins to pall and one turns with relief to some Protean artist who is never twice alike.

ARTIST AND SPECTATOR

Even when the personality of the artist is regarded as only one meaning among many that can be read from the forms of a picture it adds considerable æsthetic value; but when it is seen that this meaning is really the apex in which all the others meet, in which they are, as it were, summed up, and from which they derive a large part of their value, its previous importance is multiplied many times. But more important than any of these is the part it plays in making the spectator see the picture through the painter's eyes. It is not enough to show the spectator *what* the painter sees, or *how* he sees it: to carry the process to its fullest possible development he must be made over, for the time being, into as close a reproduction as possible of the artist himself, and nothing helps more to accomplish this than the attempt to perceive the artist in his picture. It is not so much the spectator who reconstructs the personality of the artist from his picture as it is the artist who reconstructs the spectator! In the course of one's effort to comprehend what manner of man he is all the elements in one's own personality that are antagonistic to him are automatically relegated to the background of consciousness, or banished from it entirely, while the elements which are sympathetic to it, and especially those which resemble it, are brought into the foreground and greatly intensified. The result is that the further the process is carried the more one comes actually to resemble the personality that one is trying to apprehend. And as the defenses by which one naturally resists such a transformation go down one by one under the influence of one's increasing enthusiasm for the man and his work it becomes possible to say with literal truth that one is, for the moment, possessed by the spirit of the artist.

It is some such transformation as this that we have in mind

when we say that some great, highly original artist was obliged to *create* his own audience; for when either he or his art is too different from everything that we are accustomed to it is simply not possible for us to grasp it until we have been in some measure made over into the sort of man who created it.

These transformations differ from the ordinary, elementary processes of appreciation as an earthquake does from a clap of thunder; and in the last analysis it is probably they, more than any other single factor, that give to æsthetic experience its tremendous importance in human life. It is not merely that they are soul-shaking; we have also to remember that the change which they bring about is nearly always to something deeper, finer, and more intense than our normal selves. Altogether, perhaps the only experience that can be fairly compared to them is that of religious conversion.

Sometimes the spectator finds the personality of the artist so repellent that he turns away in disgust before this transformation can even begin. Indeed, being turned even for a moment into a man of that type is the last thing he would knowingly consent to! The personalities of Rubens, Brouwer, Goya, Zuloaga, and others often seem, for this reason, more of an obstacle to their æsthetic success than a help. Yet how often one is drawn irresistibly back to the work of such a man, merely, so one believes, to indulge more deeply in the thoroughly righteous pleasure of hating something that is so magnificently hateful. And gradually one begins to note, first, a growing pleasure in the mere perception of so pungent a flavor (which is quite independent of the fact that one happens to dislike the flavor intensely); then, a few traces of respect for a man who is so virile and original, and who can impart so much of this virility to his painting; and in the end one abandons oneself wholly to the enjoyment of his power and his color and forgets, as long as one remains under his spell, to disapprove of him,—recognizing, if one happens to

feel a need of rationalizing one's conduct, that he is unquestionably the best obtainable guide and interpreter for the picture he has created.

ARTISTIC PERSONALITY

But here once more, as in the case of emotion, the trend of our æsthetic development is away from the personality of the man and toward the personality of the artist. The picture of the whole man may remain in consciousness as a sort of incidental music, which either enhances one's pleasure in the rest of the performance or sets up a faint irritation which has to be resolutely suppressed, but the main current of attention is focused on that narrower, more highly specialized portion of his personality which constitutes the artist in him.

The distinction between the two is a subtle one and is never easy to master. The public in general clings tenaciously to the belief that the style is the man, and holds that Puvis de Chavannes was a pale æsthete, Rubens a lascivious cutthroat, and Cézanne and Matisse a pair of dangerous maniacs. Even people who can see clearly that art is a very different thing from the rest of life often find it hard to understand that when a man is functioning as an artist he becomes a very different person from what he is at other times.

Not everyone who makes his living with a brush becomes a full-fledged artist. Angelico, for instance, remained essentially a pious man who now and then, almost by accident and quite unconsciously, turned into an artist. Benozzo had a clearer idea of what it meant to be an artist, realized keenly that he was one, and was intensely proud of the fact; yet his idea of art was elementary compared to Mantegna's or Botticelli's—just as Botticelli's was elementary compared to Velasquez's or Vermeer's.

The artist-personality is sometimes built around a definite

core, such as Cranach's devotion to beauty, or Monticelli's interest in color, or Van Gogh's creative intensity, or Tintoretto's impetuosity, but in its higher forms it is more likely to consist of a marvelous mixture of knowledge of art, sensitiveness to it, awareness of its nature and its function, creative power, an ability to follow any lead that the work in hand may throw out, and the like. (There are a hundred phrases that would be helpful in trying to describe what an artist is like.) Titian, in whom no one of these gifts takes precedence of, or dominates, all the rest, and in whom the man is merged almost indistinguishably in the artist, is more typical of the species than any of the more highly specialized painters.

One might even say that the artist-personality is only a personification of the chief æsthetic qualities of the picture itself,—a sort of mythological, anthropomorphic creation which we postulate to explain the picture's existence. But that does not imply that it is merely a superfluity which we could just as well dispense with. In the first place, it satisfies a desire, which is always very powerful in us, to deal if possible not with that comparatively limited entity the creature but with the much vaster and more powerful, and therefore more interesting, one, the creator. And in the second place, it possesses one great attribute which the picture itself can never display,—namely, consciousness. To view the forms of a picture in the light of the consciousness that created them magnifies and intensifies and quickens them almost beyond belief, and reveals a universe of forces, beauties, meanings, and purposes in them which could never have been perceived without its aid.

The greatest contribution of the last few decades to the evolution of art has been the rounding out, the deepening, and the widespread diffusion of this full æsthetic consciousness, —and among laymen as well as among artists. There have

probably never been in the world before, at any one time, so many persons who could give to art so intelligent, so comprehensive, or so intense an appreciation, or so many who could create a type of art worthy of their efforts. Could any other age in history, for example, have produced the adulation which has been heaped on a difficult exotic like Cézanne? I cannot but feel that we have in this unparalleled knowledge of and sensitiveness to art the raw material at least for one of the greatest of all its great ages. But whether the rest of the environment is favorable enough to allow such an age to come to maturity only the future can say.

CHAPTER XXIII

EXTERNAL FACTORS

BOOKS

No æsthetic experience can be completely explained without taking into consideration a number of factors which lie wholly outside the work of art that has aroused it. The frame that surrounds a picture, the light in the gallery, the texture and color of the wall, the age of the picture and its cost, and the nature of the composition that one has been looking at a moment before all influence one's reaction,—however repugnant the thought may be to idealists, sentimentalists, and æstheticians. But of all these external influences the greatest, in modern times at least, are those that are derived from books.

Everyone who has seen an interesting picture wants to read something about it. The æsthetic experience seems to leave behind it a sort of psychological vortex which draws into itself all the available information about the picture, the artist, and art in general. The thirst for facts and anecdotes about the artist is particularly strong; and they serve to fill out the gaps in the portrait of him that we have just built up from his picture, intensify our interest in him and in his work, and enable us to respond more intelligently to everything that he has done. It is as if this after-appetite for facts turned instinctively to the things which would do most to increase our pleasure in the picture the next time we encountered it.

If æsthetic experience actually took place in some absolute, impersonal, unchangeable consciousness, as most writers on æsthetics seem to assume, it might be permissible to neglect these contributory, modifying factors; but since, as a matter

of fact, it arises in a complex, volatile, impressionable human mind it is absurd to exclude them from any discussion of the subject.

Critical essays, works on æsthetics, and histories of art also increase the efficiency of our æsthetic faculties. To read a fine criticism of a picture is, essentially, to hear it "performed" by a virtuoso; and one's own private performances of the work cannot fail to benefit from the study of such a model. The special utility of the study of æsthetics lies in the great variety of general concepts—such as symmetry, balance, proportion, and chiaroscuro—with which it equips our minds,—and which are as necessary to any full appreciation of art as tools and machinery are to the carrying on of modern civilization. They play, I am sure, at least as great a part in the process of appreciation as the innumerable memories of natural objects which enable us to supply meanings for the various representative forms in a picture, even though they begin to operate only at a comparatively high level of development. History is the literary maid-of-all-work among writings on painting,—interpreting pictures, tracing their origins, pointing out their relationships to other pictures, calling our attention insistently to various men such as Giotto, Masaccio, and Cézanne who, if left to their own innate power of advertisement, would be sadly neglected, and generally supplying us with a great variety of critical tools, reagents, and illuminants. History, as we have already noted, is peculiarly liable to errors of emphasis—and much of the harm that it has done in this way still awaits correction—but in spite of this failing it is probably, on the whole, the most useful, as well as the most popular and the most imposing, of the literary servants of art.

History and literature together have given us the extremely useful concept of the school of painters. The notion of the school is not an abstraction but represents a living reality.

The personality of a given school of painters is not merely a composite photograph of the personalities of its various members but has a distinct character and individuality of its own. The bonds between master and pupil and between the various contemporaries who are working together in the same city and are exposed to the same influences are comparable, at least, to the bonds which tie the various elements in an individual personality into a unified whole; and the development of a great school through one generation after another parallels rather closely the development of a single great artist through the various periods of his life. The concept of the school may be poorer and vaguer in meaning than the names of its most distinguished members, but, on the other hand, it is much richer than the names of the minor men. The Florentine school, for example, counts for less as a factor in our æsthetic experience than the personality of Botticelli but counts for considerably more than the personalities of Granacci and Bugiardini. And as a meaning to be read from paintings it has, because of the many types which it includes and the imposing evolution which it has undergone, a peculiar richness of flavor which even the most gifted individual artist could never acquire. The true æsthetic value of any school is revealed most clearly when it steps forward to serve as foster-parent for the anonymous works that have been attributed to it.

The most distinctive function of the school as a factor in æsthetic experience is, however, its faculty of sensitizing us to the special qualities which distinguish its members as a group from other painters, or which have played an especially prominent part in its evolution. Every painter who has worked in a given tradition throws some new light on each of his colleagues, revealing some aspect of his work that would otherwise have remained hidden or obscure. Giorgione and Bellini serve as an interpretative prologue to Titian; Rubens

profits considerably from having had such lesser lights as Jordaens and Van Dyck to revolve about him; and Greco is likely to remain obscure and confusing until one begins to interpret him as an offshoot from Tintoretto. It is largely because Blake neither founded a school nor sprang from one that he is still so hard to understand.

Of course the application of ready-made meanings to art is fraught with danger, for no picture ought to mean quite the same to any two people and the attempt to make it do so is likely to result only in irritation and disgust. And those voluble persons who display a vast knowledge of the best that has been thought and said about painting but no evidence of ever having had any real æsthetic contact with a picture themselves are,—with their opposites, whose natural sensitiveness to art has obviously been choked and warped by the half-baked theories which they have picked up from some intemperate book on the subject,—among the most pathetic of all visitors to the galleries. Here, if anywhere, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing; if one must read books about art the only safe course is to choose works which contradict each other—or themselves—as often as possible. I can especially recommend for this purpose the works of Ruskin, Berenson, Croce, Willard Huntington Wright, and, for anyone who reads German, Lipps, and Lange. By the time the reader has finished them he will know either more or less about art than he does at present, and a move in either direction will probably represent progress.

FAME

In the early stages of appreciation one is likely to encounter the aura of fame which surrounds a great artist oftener than his real personality. This has its advantages as well as its disadvantages. The magnetic attraction of great fame has tided many a young rebel over the dangerous years in which he is

inclined to reject most of the painting of the past because he can see no present beauty in it. And by a strange parallelism, the intoxication which sets in when one surrenders uncritically to the hypnotic power of a great reputation gives a real foretaste of the pleasures of true æsthetic ecstasy, which, long after the spurious substitute has ceased to be exhilarating, continues to serve as both guide and incentive in one's long search for more legitimate means of arousing the same sensations.

We can deduce from the sister art of the theater a still sounder reason for allowing to the hypnotic power of fame some genuine æsthetic merit. Here, as everyone knows, the audience is an extremely important part of the performance; played before a house of a few scattering spectators, the greatest of dramas would lose half of its æsthetic impact. It has been assumed too hastily, from the fact that the presence of other spectators in a picture gallery is disturbing rather than inspiring, that painting is in this respect an essentially solitary art. Would it not be better to say that the audience is there, playing its part in breaking down inhibitions and generating waves of enthusiasm just as in the theater,—except for this one difference: that it is present not in the flesh but only in the mind of the spectator, in the form of a cloud of invisible witnesses who testify constantly to the beauty and greatness of the picture before him? It is impossible to judge a famous picture as hurriedly or as indifferently as one that is unknown; and when it does happen to please us we can float off into ecstasies of admiration with fewer doubts as to whether we are doing just the right thing. It would be hard to set boundaries to the influence of fame. I am sure that it plays a larger part in the æsthetic life of even the most independent critics than most of them would be willing to admit; in fact, it is probably as unavoidable as breathing. And even if one succeeded in throwing off the judgments of the rest of the world there would still be a succession of one's own past judgments welling up to interfere

in precisely the same way with the forming of a fresh, wholly spontaneous impression of a picture.

Yet anyone who relies too much on fame as an æsthetic stimulant will find that it turns gradually into a deadly narcotic, which is capable of destroying all his powers of original thought and feeling, blinding him to the real nature of art and rendering him wholly unable to derive any pleasure from art unless it comes to him with the best of recommendations. It would be well for anyone who suspects that he may be slipping into this unfortunate condition to examine with deep distrust the roster of his favorite painters, until he is thoroughly convinced that he loves each of them for himself alone and not because he has been hypnotized into it.

Certain hardheaded people are always ready to explain the concept of greatness in art wholly in terms of fame. Certain reputations, they say, grow overwhelmingly until no one dares any longer to attack them, and from that point on they roll through the centuries like a snowball, gaining magnitude and impressiveness from every generation that they crush beneath them. A few people only, being somewhat hardheaded, venture to question these reputations, but as they are not specialists in art no one takes them seriously and the great illusion goes on. The majority, being both docile and sentimental, merely strain a little harder to feel the proper emotions in the presence of the "great" works and, because self-deception is extremely easy in this field, succeed marvelously well—and thus unwittingly contribute their bit toward keeping up this vast and astounding hoax.

It must be admitted that there are several kernels of truth in this theory, but as an explanation of the æsthetic quality which we call greatness it is preposterous. But greatness, which could not be adequately treated in a work of encyclopædic dimensions, must be allotted at least a chapter of its own.

CHAPTER XXIV

GREATNESS

THE DETERMINATION OF GREATNESS

The concept of greatness is probably the most troublesome that the student of art is obliged to wrestle with. It is so arbitrary, and artificial, and complex, and tyrannical that one often longs to throw it off in order to enjoy pictures more naturally,—one at a time, and unhaunted by any obligation to keep up a perpetual comparison between them and to be seen chiefly in the company of the best. This is a sound and natural instinct, but it is impractical to give it full control over one's æsthetic life; the conflicting instinct which makes one want to weigh and compare is as useful here as anywhere—and it is useless to try to exclude works of art from the universal human tendency toward hero-worshiping, which invariably exalts the few names at the head of any list at the expense of all the rest. It is a tendency which it is more useful to understand than to combat. In fact, a knowledge of the considerations which cause men to term one artist great rather than another is one of the three or four most valuable bits of information that a human being can acquire.

It is surprising to note how few writers on art and æsthetics have shown any adequate comprehension of the extreme complexity of the concept of greatness. The majority either, like Ruskin, set up some test for greatness which is far too simple, or take it for granted that everyone has an *a priori* knowledge of what greatness is and needs to be instructed only as to who is great. They fail notably, too, to make it clear whether they are telling us, at any given point, what they think the

word greatness *ought* to mean or what it actually seems to them to mean as it occurs in ordinary speech.

What greatness ought to mean is a very fascinating subject, but it seems to me more important here to find out what it really does mean to persons who are competent to distinguish between mediocrity and greatness, and to study a little into the processes by which it is, or may be, determined. And I believe that the most satisfactory method of investigation will be to set up some trial hypothesis, as a first approximation to the truth, and then make whatever revisions or amendments it may seem to need.

Let us begin then with the assumption that greatness must be measured by the *quality of the æsthetic experience* which a work is able to arouse in the mind of the spectator. Two of the substitutes which are commonly offered—conformity to some arbitrary, predetermined theory of what art ought to be, or to some set of so-called objective tests—are wholly derivative and secondary,—laborious, mechanical methods of arriving at a conclusion which might better be reached directly by the method I have just suggested. A third substitute, which consists in asking how well a work of art expresses what the artist had in mind when he set out to create it, is so oddly irrelevant, so obviously a wild, unconsidered guess at the truth, that one wonders how it ever attained its present popularity. Art, in the highest sense of the word, is never a communication from the artist to the spectator; it is not a language, a medium for the exchange of ideas and feelings, but a pure creation, an end in itself. If it must be interpreted in terms of direct intercourse between artist and spectator, let us call it an operation performed by the artist on his audience; it is more like hypnotism than like conversation. And if we approach the problem from the opposite side the same fact shows up still more clearly: we do not go to a work of art primarily to find out what was in the artist's mind but to receive from it a pleasur-

able experience of a distinctive type. And the value that we set on the work varies according to the degree in which we receive this experience.

Some would measure this value by the *quantity* of pleasure received rather than by the quality of the experience, but there are several obvious defects in this method. In the first place, it is unreliable: pleasure is by no means the sole constituent of æsthetic experience, and to disregard the various other ingredients, which may be too poignant or too pungent to be wholly pleasurable, is to arrive at a false estimate of the value of the whole; and pleasure also varies too erratically, with the health, humor, and general happiness of the observer, to make a dependable standard of measurement. And if, to avoid this difficulty, we turn to the statistical method and declare that greatness cannot be measured by the pleasure of any individual but only by "the greatest pleasure of the greatest number" we run into serious mathematical difficulties.

On what scale, for instance, can the pleasure felt by any single individual be measured? How can it possibly be compared with the pleasure felt by someone else? And is there anything but wild absurdity in the notion of adding together the quantities of pleasure felt by the innumerable people who have seen a certain picture and then comparing it with the sum of the various pleasures experienced by the various people who have gazed at some other picture? It would be much easier to add the taste of two cherries to the taste of seven apples and decide whether it was greater or less than the taste of three strawberries plus the taste of four oranges! And has any æsthetician or critic made a serious, mathematical attack on the problem of finding a maximum for the equation with two variables which is presented by the phrase "the greatest pleasure of the greatest number?" Suppose, for example, that you had by the exercise of some incredible omniscience discovered that picture A, painted in 1500, had given 1,000,000

units of pleasure to the 1,000,000 people who had seen it, while picture B, which had been seen by only 800,000 people, had nevertheless given them 1,250,000 units of pleasure, how would you set to work, as a mathematical æsthetician, to determine which of these combinations of figures represented "the greatest pleasure of the greatest number" in this particular case? I am afraid that it must be dismissed as one more of those fine-sounding phrases whose practical value is something less than zero. The quality of the æsthetic experience, aroused by a given picture is, however, much less variable and much less dependent on accidental circumstances; and since it can be remembered more vividly and more definitely than pleasure it affords a better basis for a comparison of values.

But the trouble is that we can't decide whose experience to use as a standard. It is to avoid this dilemma that men have wandered off in search of all sorts of objective and statistical tests for greatness. Our only motive in trying to establish a fixed hierarchy among painters is to secure a scale of values whose validity will be universal,—and how can we gain universality from the opinions of any one man?

A very clever and useful modern solution of the problem sets up as the final judge of artistic values an imaginary consciousness which is assumed to be abstract, disembodied, and non-human, so that it cannot react physically to what it sees, cannot interpret meanings in a form, and can find pleasure only in pure perception. Nothing in art, say the devotees of this method, has any particular æsthetic value unless it is capable of giving pleasure to a consciousness of this type, and the greatest pictures are those which offer it the greatest æsthetic experience. The great beauty of this system of values lies in its universality—a consciousness of this type lies embedded in the mind of every individual and can be dissected out without too much difficulty—and in the emphasis it places

on the fact that every work of art needs a vigorous and vital core of pure form; but it is too narrow and too arbitrarily limited to be wholly trustworthy: æsthetic experience, as a matter of fact, does not take place in an artificial and imaginary consciousness but in a broad, deep, and richly endowed human one—and we have already come to the conclusion that the greatness of a picture depends largely on the extent to which it draws the whole of one's personality into the æsthetic experience. In fact, if a work ever allows us to perceive that it is engaging only a part of our attention we set it down at once as a very minor picture.

We may exclude for similar reasons all other consciousnesses that are in any way incomplete. A man who is color-blind or suffers from any other optical defect that is too serious to be corrected can never become a dependable judge of pictures, and neither can an insane man or a moron, or even a man whose mind is shallow, warped, insensitive, or immature. Indeed, in order to pass for a supreme authority in this field a man must possess an imposing variety of positive qualifications. It is not enough for him to be peculiarly sensitive to all the various aspects of painting and to have acquired a wide experience with it and a profound knowledge of its principles, together with those of a number of other arts as well; he must also be strong, well-balanced, mature, wise in the ways of the world, and, above all, a man whose opinions would naturally command respect. He must be fitted, that is to say, to judge a picture both as a work of art and as a record of human life. I have said enough already to indicate that he cannot be a youth, although youth is likely to be more responsive to art than age, but must be a man who has passed through most of the wild enthusiasms and prejudices of the early years of art-appreciation and has settled down to opinions which are not likely to change materially in a decade or two.

But where shall we find such a figure? There is only one

possible answer: he must be imagined. It is highly improbable that anyone quite perfect enough for the position should ever exist in the flesh; but as an ideal he is neither impossible nor impractical. It is not necessary to imagine from the ground up what such a figure might think about pictures; he would be called into consultation merely as an ideal by which to check up the opinions of living, and therefore fallible, critics. They would supply the solid groundwork of æsthetic experience, the full and intricate individual reactions by which alone art can be properly judged, and he the higher criticism by which their deficiencies and prejudices and over-enthusiasms could be detected and corrected.

This is not a revolutionary proposal but only a regularization of the natural process by which judgments on art are formed and gain currency. They may be formulated and proposed by a number of forceful critics, but before they are generally accepted they have to be passed on, and liberally amended, by mankind at large, sitting informally as a committee of the whole. The whole process is an endless series of checks, balances, and revisions. The race at large depends chiefly on its experts; the experts, in turn, rely on the accepted body of æsthetic law; and these laws have been slowly filtered out from a great mass of instinctive critical judgments. No one is qualified to hand down immediately, *ex cathedra,* a valid judgment of greatness; to have any value it must have been slowly deposited, grain by grain, from a long, varied, and practically continuous intercourse with art. But many men who are not competent to serve as judges themselves are quite capable, as in other fields, of detecting flaws in the judgments of others, and it is largely by their aid that the main body of criticism tends constantly to approach the truth.

I cannot claim any great positive value for this method of determining greatness, except for the new support which it contributes to the theory of human values which Whitman ex-

pressed in the dictum that "whatever tastes sweet to the most perfect person is finally right," for it is, like the English constitution, only a legalization of the existing practice; but it will at least enable us to get rid of the mass of artificial doctrine which now holds the field,—and that alone would represent a considerable step in advance. As we learn more about what human beings value and why, we may be able to reach out once more toward some more objective, more universal, and more final basis of judgment.

THE AUTHORITY OF GREATNESS

But the most important question to ask about greatness, is, What does it signify? What authority has it? What obligations does it impose on me? And the most important point to consider in framing a reply is that it is not a purely æsthetic quality but contains a broadly human element as well; it is not enough for a picture to be a great æsthetic structure: we must also be able to feel that it was painted by a great artist and by a great man; these three factors may be combined in various proportions but no one of them may fall below a certain minimum.

The authority which greatness has over us takes three different forms, which I may term æsthetic, developmental, and human. It is in the first place a guide to immediate æsthetic value, though this is its least reliable and least authoritative aspect, for at least three reasons. Taste varies greatly among different individuals and may sometimes make a minor picture more pleasing than a great one; a great picture, too, may be somewhat advanced and complex and not altogether easy to understand at once; and greatness, as we have just noted, is not based wholly on æsthetic values and therefore does not indicate accurately their relative magnitudes. Yet its accuracy is high enough to make it dangerous for anyone who

wishes to derive the greatest possible pleasure from art to neglect the tips which greatness offers.

Greatness is in the second place a guide to the normal evolution of taste; it points out the pictures which a great majority of all the people who have attained a certain stage of appreciation will care most for; it indicates the direction in which anyone who develops at all will move,—and by doing so makes that development swifter and more certain. There is probably some obligation, based both on social pressure and on one's own inner desires, to reach this æsthetic maturity; but I believe, as I have remarked before, that it is a mistake for anyone to feel ashamed of not having reached it already, or to strain unduly to get there in an impossibly short space of time. Like physical and mental growth, it is a slow process which cannot be forced without injury.

Greatness is, finally, a guide to the most fundamental human values, and it is here that it bears on us with the greatest force; for if we recognize any obligations whatsoever in life they must inevitably include the obligation to rise to as high a human level as we can, and the surest way of accomplishing this is to become familiar with the natural scale of human values. It matters comparatively little whether we actually do appreciate the greatest pictures as they deserve, but it is of the greatest importance that we should possess the latent power to do so and that we should know why they are great and why others are not. Art is one of the widest and the clearest of the lenses that reveal to us the invisible topography of the human spirit and no one can hope to reach full maturity as a human being until he has learned to use it.

ORIGINALITY

Before proceeding to give practical examples of the determination of greatness. I should like to digress for a little to

consider one of the factors in æsthetic experience which has mistakenly been believed to be indispensable to greatness,—I refer to originality.

Of course originality does possess a very high æsthetic value, because it is such a powerful stimulant to attention, but it suffers from the defects which are common to all stimulants: its effects wear off rapidly, and the constant attempt to renew them with new originalities saddles us with a pernicious drug-habit. We flit from picture to picture like so many bees, sipping from each only its originality and never pausing to sink deeply into the enjoyment of its full beauty, until we lose the power to appreciate a picture for what it really is and can enjoy only its differences from the pictures that have preceded it. This is particularly true of an age like the present in which every department of life is so full of change that we can enjoy nothing unless it is novel.

A fairly accurate notion of the value of any æsthetic element may be obtained by noticing what sort of painters are most highly praised for it; and we unquestionably hear more about the originality of the lesser men like Masaccio, Constable, and Monet than about the originality of Titian, Rembrandt, and Velasquez. Of course the latter were original and have been praised for it, but we rather take it for granted as we do personal cleanliness in a king, and, as in the case of Shakespeare, it takes a very insignificant place in the sum-total of their virtues.

Even the belief that originality is a sign of great artistic power is more or less of a delusion. It may indicate courage, aggressiveness, and intellectual strength, but it is only incidentally connected with creative power; a really great painter can paint at least as well in an established style as in one that he has just invented, and whatever originality he does display is likely to be a by-product of his effort to capture some particular effect in nature. In at least three cases out

of four it will be found that the novel style or technique for which he is praised was borrowed, in its essentials, from some lesser man who was never able to catch the attention of the world, or from some other art.

Furthermore, whether the work of any particular painter appears original or not is largely a matter of chance. If he happens to find a technique that suits his needs ready-made he will not go out of his way to invent a new one. If he happens to be born with one temperament, whatever he does will seem original to his fellow men, while if he is born with another he will seem like all the rest. And if he happens to be born into an age like the present which is as dependent on originality in art as it is on salt and pepper in its food he will make a more determined effort to acquire it than if he had been born into some more conservative age which cared more for tradition than for novelty. And originality, it appears, is surprisingly easy to acquire. An idea borrowed from a scientist, a critic, or a worker in some other art needs only a little earnest cultivation to expand it into an impressive revolution. In fact, it is probably just this extreme ease of cultivation, which enables any second-rate hack who will take the trouble to pose for a time as the leader of a new movement, which will ultimately reduce originality to its proper place among the æsthetic virtues.

Yet originality, as I have hinted, is often the natural sign of the much more valuable quality which is called individuality. As beauty is often the sign of internal health and balance, so originality is often the sign of a powerful and highly organized personality. Yet it is a mistake to confuse it with the individuality which it adumbrates: originality corresponds merely to the differences between the stripes of a tiger and the wrinkles of an elephant; individuality, to the profounder differences between the temperaments, internal structures, and habits of the two animals. The more deeply

one studies originality the less important it seems in the whole æsthetic complex, but the uniqueness of individuality is inexhaustible and increases with every moment of attention that is devoted to it. Individuality may be defined as the principle of unity which pervades and binds together the various parts of an organism,—and when it permeates a painting it performs the same function for the various parts of the æsthetic organism; but originality, since it is nothing but the difference between one picture and another, can never play anything but a very superficial rôle in the process. Originality, too, can be completely exhausted in the course of time: the number of strikingly original styles that can be evolved in painting is definitely limited just as the number of mountain peaks that can be thrown up on a given area of the earth's surface is limited, for if the number is increased beyond a certain point none of the styles any longer seems original, and the mountains degenerate into either pinnacles or hillocks. But individuality can be increased indefinitely, as the height of a given number of mountains can; it is the product of an intensive cultivation, to which no one can set any final limit.

THE RANKING OF PAINTERS

I should be glad to avoid any attempt at an actual ranking of painters,—largely because, in the face of the severe requirements I have just laid down, I do not feel competent to undertake the task, but partly because I do not wish to tempt anyone to take greatness too seriously,—but I suppose it is a performance which, at the end of a book designed to answer most of the questions which trouble the average lover of pictures, and particularly at the end of a chapter devoted to the theory of greatness, I cannot decently avoid. I beg the reader to regard it merely as an experiment in a new technique, which he may repeat for himself whenever he is ready, and

to pay much more attention to the somewhat novel classification which I have to suggest than to the names which I have selected to fill it.

It seems to me wholly impractical to arrange any number of painters, however small, in strict numerical order according to their artistic merits, and I shall try instead to distribute them among a number of groups according to their type of greatness,—leaving it to someone who feels better qualified to determine the proper order of merit within each group.

I should limit my first group to the few names which could not by any possibility be placed in any class lower than the very highest; and I suggest as its members Titian, Rembrandt, Velasquez, and Michelangelo,—Titian, because he could blend the various elements in a picture more perfectly into a single whole than any other man who has ever handled a brush; Rembrandt and Velasquez, because they expressed through a perfect command of the medium of paint a great breadth and nobility of mind; and Michelangelo, because, although he may have been surpassed by lesser men in the manipulation of this particular medium, he showed himself here, as clearly as he did in marble, too sublime an artist to be relegated to any lower rank; and all four, because they seem almost equally great as painters, as artists, and as men, and are marred by no serious flaws either of genius or of character.

My second group does not lie a full step below the first, and perhaps hardly half a step. It is composed of the painters who though they have too many of the attributes of greatness to be separated by a full interval from the members of the first group cannot, because of some shortcoming or other, be placed wholly on a par with them.

No name in this group stands higher than Giorgione's. In quality of achievement he is the equal of the very greatest; and if he must be ranked a little lower it is only because the quantity of his work is too slight to support a figure of the

magnitude of Titian's or Velasquez's, and because his life came to an end before he had wholly emerged from the dreaminess and remoteness of youth into the power and splendor of maturity.

Leonardo's life was longer, but the list of his unquestioned pictures is even shorter than Giorgione's, and only one among them, the *Mona Lisa,* is of absolutely the first order. As a man, he is perhaps the most interesting figure in the history of painting; but the painter in him was pressed too hard by the scientist and the experimenter to be able to give us all that we expect from a supremely great work of art.

If creative power, technical accomplishments, and a brilliant mind could alone give title to greatness no one could dispute Tintoretto's claim to a place in the first group; but when we pass beyond color, draftmanship, composition, and imagination and begin to ask for maturity, self-consciousness, balance, and the ability to carry a piece of work to completion—all the qualities, in short, which make up the final crown of greatness—he proves deficient. He is too impatient, too much a creature of instinct, and too dependent to inspiration to compete with well disciplined and highly developed minds. He was designed for greatness but stopped before he had reached it; he was a Titan, but only a half-grown one.

Rubens must be placed still lower than Tintoretto. Pictures flowed from his brush in such a torrent of exuberant life that one is obliged to recognize him as one of the most powerful and most elemental forces in painting—an art in which fertility and facility are comparatively rare—and to admit that many of his compositions are very splendid and exhilarating; yet when the question of his greatness has to be decided one cannot overlook the fact that where Tintoretto, for example, is genuinely creative Rubens is merely prolific and where he is powerful Rubens is merely fluent, and it becomes impossible to consider him for the highest rank.

Raphael's star, like Rubens's, is rapidly setting. The Sistine Madonna, the many beautiful figures in his other pictures, his great skill as a composer, and the power which he has exercised over the human mind for more than four centuries assure him a place in the second group, but his weakness as a colorist and the fatal softness of his spirit make it impossible to consider him any longer as a serious candidate for the first.

Jan Vermeer is, with the possible exception of Velasquez, the most perfect craftsman in paint who has ever lived; and even Velasquez has not left so many canvases which give one a sense of being in the presence of the utmost luxury that the eye can enjoy. If he had only been a little more imaginative, or less satisfied to spend his life in recording insignificant events on canvases of unimpressive size, or more warmly and generously human, one would have little hesitation in calling him the greatest painter who ever lived, but at his altitude these become very serious defects.

Veronese is in somewhat the same position. As a master of color and a manipulator of paint he surpasses all but the greatest, but because he is in every other respect uninteresting and unimpressive he never rises quite to their level.

Correggio, too, though he could create a beauty so delicate and so spontaneous that it hardly seems mortal, was able to do so only because he was himself a naïve and irresponsible faun; and to rank him with Rembrandt and Velasquez would be like putting Emily Dickinson on a par with Shakespeare.

The Van Eycks were masters of an impeccable technique—few paintings of any period are as superbly invulnerable to criticism as theirs—and their personalities have a substantiality and an inscrutable calm which satisfy all our demands for an element of human greatness in great art. If one observes, speaking as devil's advocate, that they are too stolid, or too narrowly realistic, or too deficient in spaciousness and generosity of spirit, or that they never reached full self-

consciousness as artists, each of these statements sounds like a gross exageration,—yet there is somehow so much truth in the sum of them that it is clear that they belong no higher than the second group.

The last name in this group is Giotto's. Both as man and as artist he exhibits as many of the stigmata of greatness as any one, but because his technical heritage from his predecessors was so scanty the finest expression he was able to achieve in paint was always too sparse and too awkward to bring his qualities to full fruition.

The painters in the third group are modeled on the lines of those in the first—being strong, many sided, well balanced, and endowed with an adequate command of brushes and pigments—and fall short of them not in any one striking point, like the members of the second group, but in a general lack of power, grandeur, nobility, and distinction. I might name as the most notable examples of this type Holbein, Dürer, Bellini, Hals, Millet, Moretto, Steen, Gainsborough, Hogarth, Delacroix, Terborch, Brouwer, Jordaens, Van Dyck, Sodoma, Brueghel, Mabuse, Chardin, Raeburn, Inness, Degas, Sargent, and Brangwyn. But since there is no way of fixing a lower limit for this group anyone may carry it as far down into the undistinguished majority as he pleases. On a purely æsthetic scale of values certain of these names might rank higher than some that I have placed in the second group, but it seems to me that when greatness is in question they must take a somewhat lower place.

The painters in the fourth group are the geniuses, specialists, and eccentrics whom the art has attracted. The æsthetic pleasure which they afford us may sometimes be more intense than any that we derive from some of the men in the higher groups, but they are either too narrow or too unbalanced or too incompletely artists to be considered anything more than the minor poets of painting. They have the mis-

fortune to be violets, carnations, and hyacinths in a world in which the highest honors always go to roses. This fourth group, like the third, shades off indistinguishably into the fifth—which receives all the painters not otherwise provided for—and anyone can fix its limits where he pleases. My own choice for its membership would be Ingres, Botticelli, Mantegna, Signorelli, Benozzo, Angelico, Piero della Francesca, Perugino, Blake, Fragonard, Watteau, Greco, Tiepolo, Corot, Turner, Van der Weyden, Memlinc, Ford Madox Brown, Paul Potter, De Hooch, Puvis de Chavannes, Goya, Burne-Jones, Böcklin, Spitzweg, Bouts, Cuyp, Cranach, Romney, Whistler,—with at least ten more whose names would change from year to year. But let no one interpret the numbers attached to these groups to mean that the painters just mentioned are fourth-rate, and those in the previous group third-rate: I have merely made four groups where most judges make only two. Very few of the names which I have listed could properly be described as lower than second-rate.

To have discovered the nature of greatness is to have reached the center of the labyrinth,—and if it seems rather disappointingly the same as the many winding paths which lead to it. I can only observe that that is the nature of labyrinths. The greatest advantage of pushing on to the center is that when one has finally arrived there one is free to wander back over the route as leisurely as one pleases, no longer driven by an incessant urge to press on toward the spot which has been so highly advertised as the goal of the whole adventure, or troubled by the instinct to despise whatever one has already passed. One can drift into any bypath or blind alley with a clear conscience and enjoy to the full whatever one may find there. To have solved the problem of greatness is to have answered the riddle of the sphinx and freed oneself from its power.

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Giotto *Santa Croce, Florence*

DEATH OF ST. FRANCIS

PLATE 1

Ghirlandajo *Sta. Trinita, Florence*

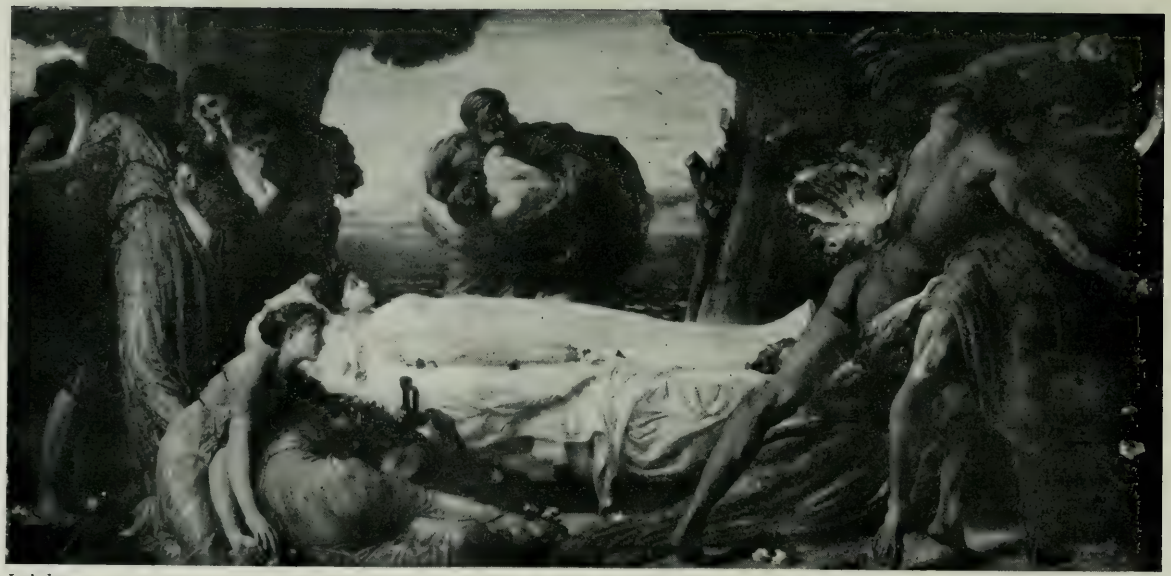
DEATH OF ST. FRANCIS

PLATE 2

Greuze *Louvre, Paris*

THE PUNISHED SON

PLATE 3



Leighton *London*

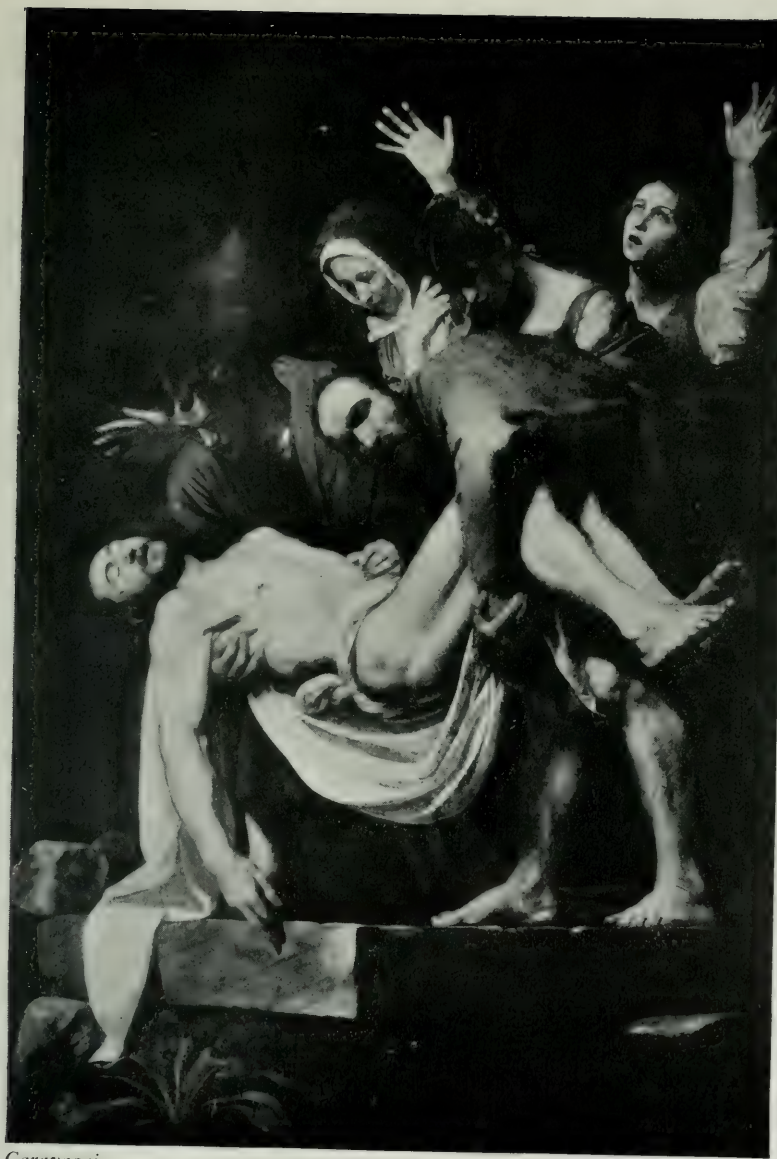
HERAKLES WRESTLING WITH DEATH

PLATE 4

Madox Brown *Birmingham Gallery*

THE LAST OF ENGLAND

PLATE 5



Caravaggio *Vatican, Rome*

ENTOMBMENT

PLATE 6

Francia *National Gallery, London*

PIETÁ

PLATE 7

Botticelli — *Alte Pinakothek, Munich*

PIETA

PLATE 8

Rembrandt *Mauritshuis, The Hague*

SCHOOL OF ANATOMY

PLATE 9

Rubens *Alte Pinakothek, Munich*

FALL OF THE DAMNED

PLATE 10

Signorelli *Cathedral, Orvieto*

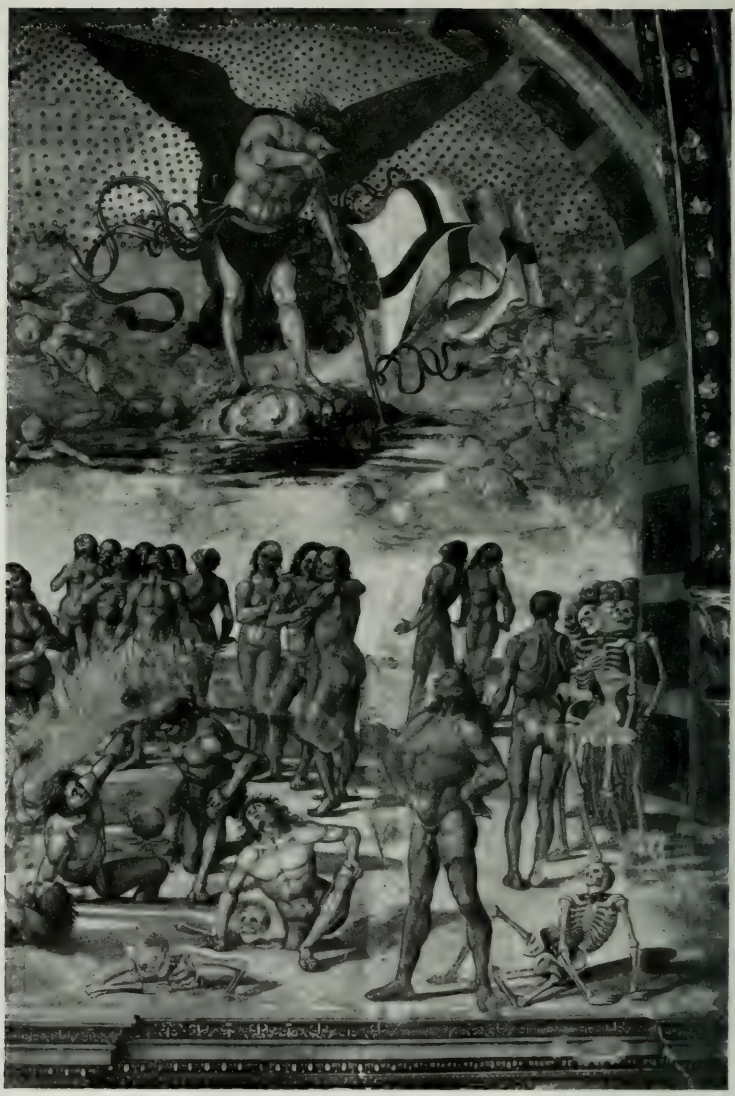
SOULS OF THE DAMNED

PLATE 11

Brueghel *Prado, Madrid*

TRIUMPH OF DEATH

PLATE 12



Signorelli *Cathedral, Orvieto*

RESURRECTION (RIGHT HALF)

PLATE 13

Fra Angelico *San Marco, Florence*

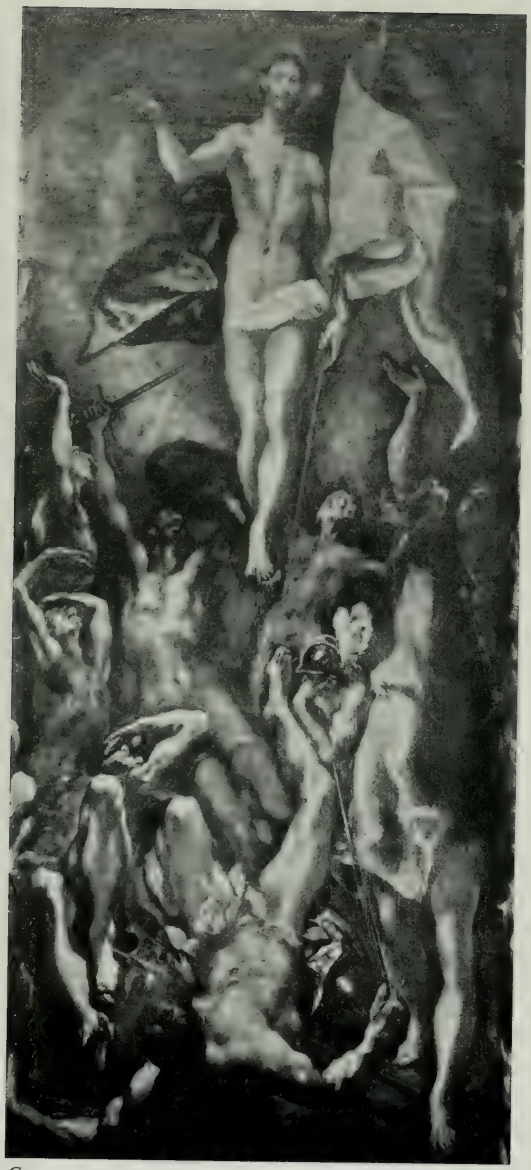
LAST JUDGMENT

PLATE 14

Rembrandt *Pinakothek, Munich*

RESURRECTION

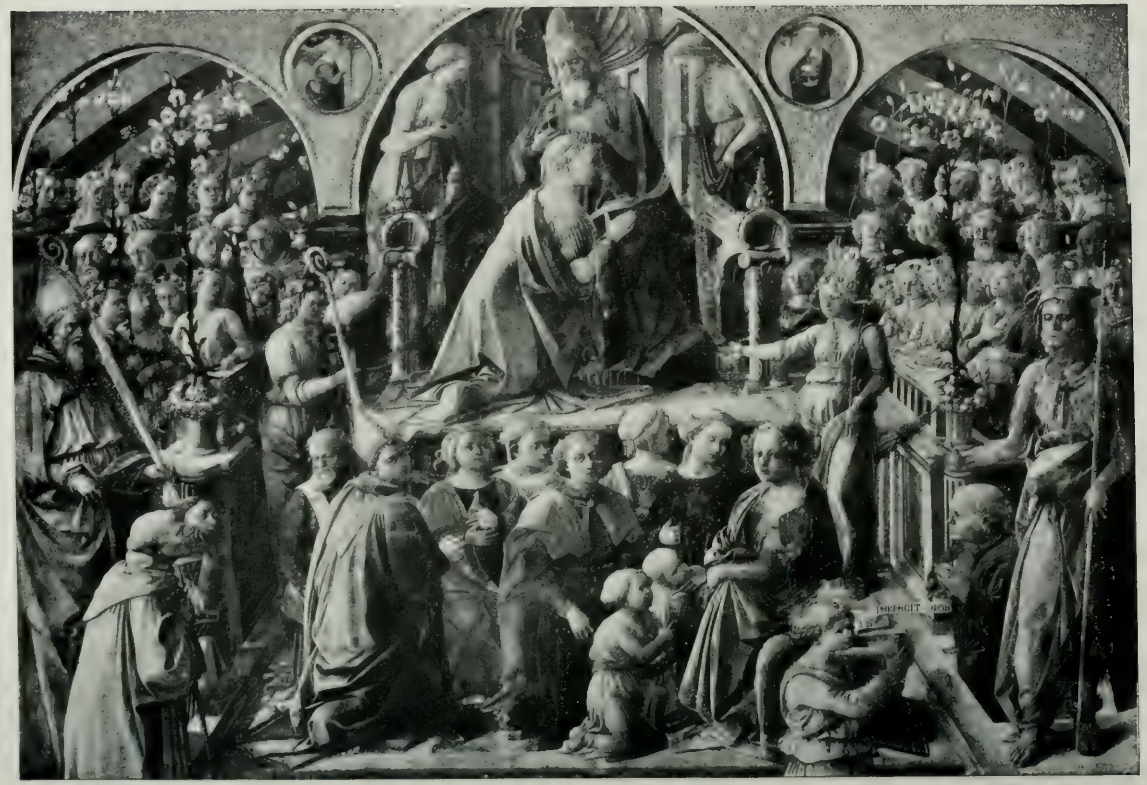
PLATE 15



Greco *Prado, Madrid*

RESURRECTION

PLATE 16



Lippo Lippi *Uffizi, Florence*

CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN

PLATE 17

Sodoma *S. Bernardino, Siena*

CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN

PLATE 18

Pintoricchio *Cathedral, Siena*

CORONATION OF PIUS III

PLATE 19

Puvis de Chavannes *Pantheon, Paris*

SAINTE GENEVIÈVE MARKED WITH THE SEAL

PLATE 20

Brangwyn *Palace of Fine Arts, San Francisco*

THE FRUIT PICKERS

PLATE 21

(Photograph by Cardinell-Vincent Co., S. F.)

Benozzo Gozzoli *Medici Chapel, Florence*

LORENZO DI MEDICI

PLATE 22

Botticelli *Uffizi, Florence*

SPRING

PLATE 23

Chanler *Luxembourg, Paris*

GIRAFFES

PLATE 24

Zurbaran *National Gallery, London*

ST. MARGARET

PLATE 25

Margaritone *Pinacoteca, Arezzo*

ST. FRANCIS

PLATE 26

Velasquez *Uffizi, Florence*

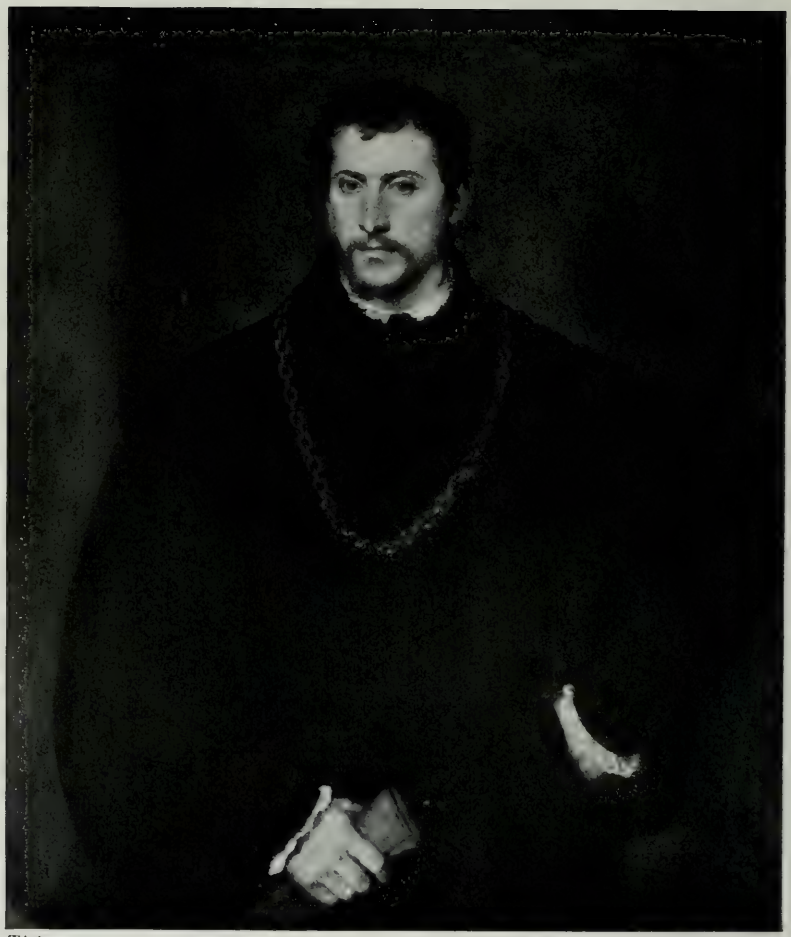
SELF-PORTRAIT

PLATE 27

Holbein *Uffizi, Florence*

SIR RICHARD SOUTHWELL

PLATE 28



Titian *Pitti, Florence*

THE DUKE OF NORFOLK

PLATE 29

Van Dyck *Metropolitan Museum, N. Y.*

MLLE. DE GOTTIGNIES

PLATE 30

Giorgione *Uffizi, Florence*

KNIGHT OF MALTA

PLATE 31

Greuze *Louvre, Paris*

THE BROKEN JUG

PLATE 32

Moroni *National Gallery, London*

THE TAILOR

PLATE 33

Ingres *Chantilly*

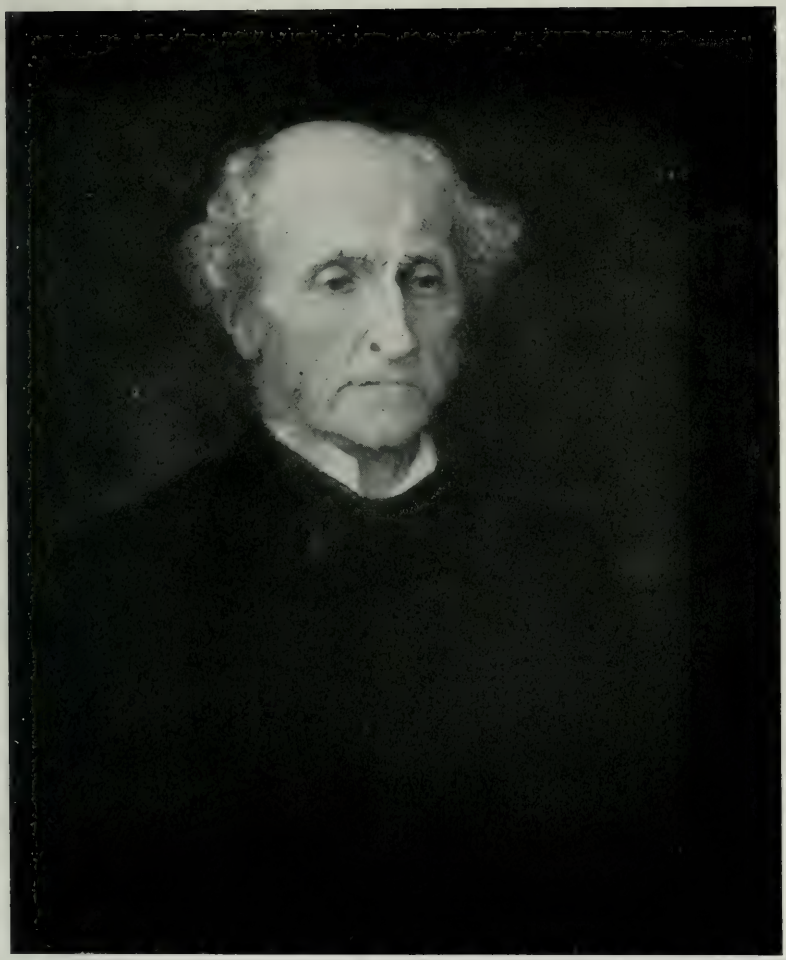
PORTRAIT OF MME. DEVAUÇAY

PLATE 34

Van Eyck *Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin*

THE MAN WITH THE PINKS

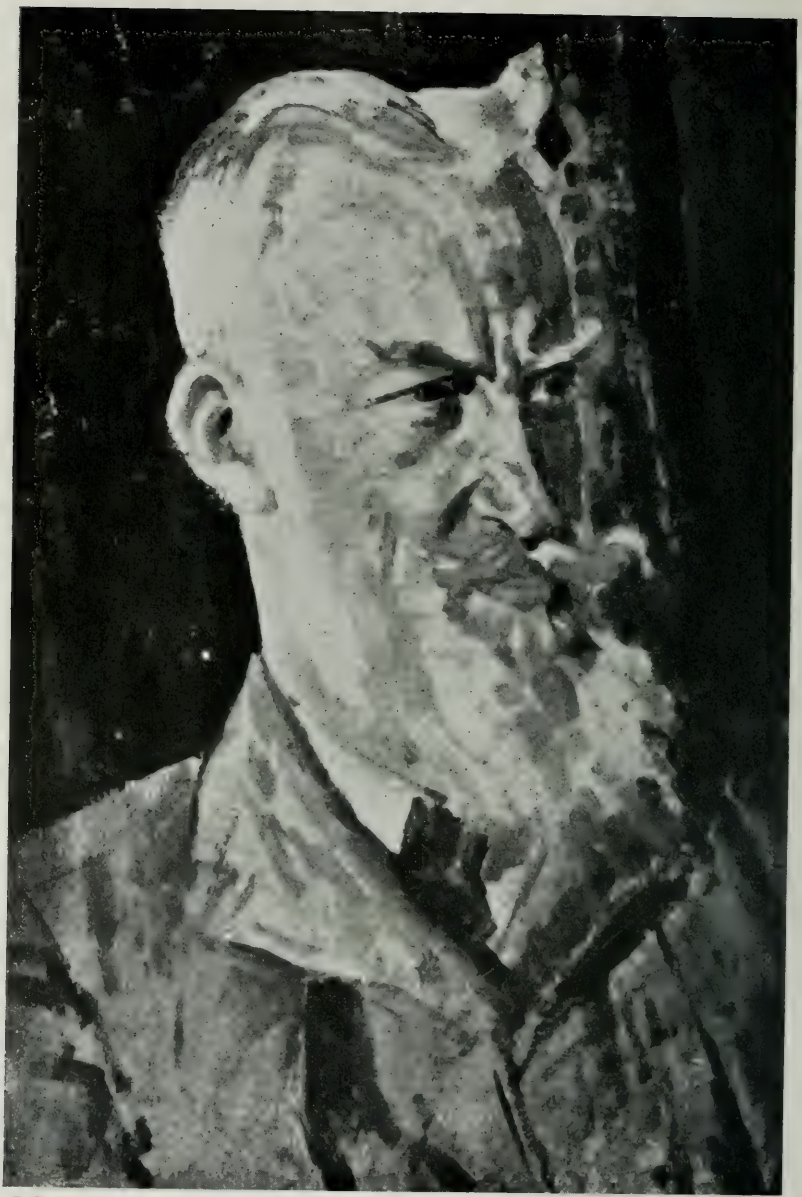
PLATE 35



Watts *National Portrait Gallery, London*

JOHN STUART MILL

PLATE 36



John *Fitzwilliam Museum, London*

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

PLATE 37

Frans Hals *Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin*

HILLE BOBBE

PLATE 38

Carrière *Petit Palais, Paris*

YOUNG MOTHERS

PLATE 39

Titian *National Gallery, London*

BACCHUS AND ARIADNE

PLATE 40

Tintoretto — *San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice*

THE LAST SUPPER

PLATE 41

Veronese *Doge's Palace, Venice*

RAPE OF EUROPA

PLATE 42

Raphael *Pitti, Florence*

MADONNA OF THE GOLDFINCH

PLATE 43

Botticelli *Uffizi, Florence*

MAGNIFICAT

PLATE 44

Cimabue *Uffizi, Florence*

MADONNA

PLATE 45

Lotto *Recanati*

ANNUNCIATION

PLATE 46

Lorenzo Monaco *National Gallery, London*

CORONATION OF THE VIRGIN

PLATE 47

Michelangelo *Sistine Chapel, Rome*

CREATION OF MAN

PLATE 48

Burne-Jones

THE MIRROR OF VENUS

PLATE 49

Mantegna *National Gallery, London*

MADONNA WITH SAINTS

PLATE 50

Bellini *San Zaccaria, Venice*

ALTARPIECE

PLATE 51

Correggio *Dresden*

MADONNA WITH ST. GEORGE

PLATE 52

Raphael *Vatican, Rome*

MADONNA DI FOLIGNO

PLATE 53

Ghirlandajo *Alte Pinakothek, Munich*

MADONNA IN GLORY

PLATE 54

Moretto *Gallery, Brescia*

ST. NICHOLAS OF BARI

PLATE 55

Tiepolo *Gesuati, Venice*

INSTITUTION OF THE ROSARY

PLATE 56

Böcklin *Museum, Basel*

VITA SOMNIUM BREVE

PLATE 57

Piero Della Francesca *National Gallery, London*

NATIVITY

PLATE 58

Carpaccio *Schiavone, Venice*

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

PLATE 59

Crivelli *Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston*

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

PLATE 60

(Photograph by Thomas E. Marr & Son)

Ignacio Zuloaga *Metropolitan Museum*

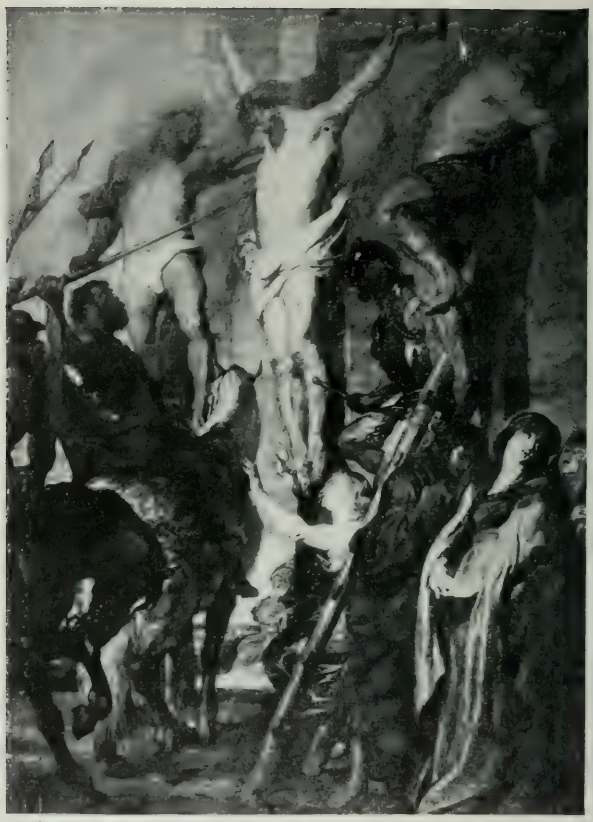
BRÉVAL AS CARMEN

PLATE 61

Franz Stuck *Neue Pinakothek, Munich*

WAR

PLATE 62



Rubens

COUP DE LANCE

PLATE 63

Jordaens *Louvre, Paris*

THE KING DRINKS

PLATE 64

Tintoretto *Church of the Hospital, Venice*

ST. URSULA

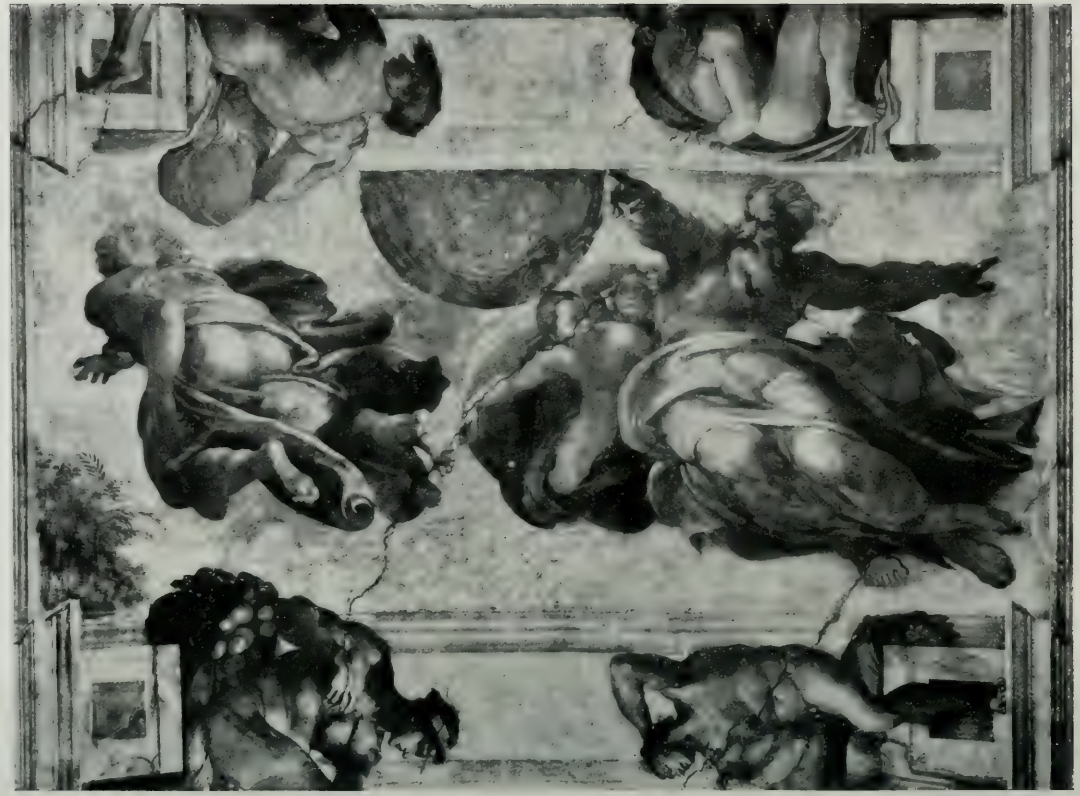
PLATE 65

Albani

Brera, Milan

DANCE OF LITTLE LOVES

PLATE 66



Michelangelo *Sistine Chapel, Rome*

CREATION OF THE SUN AND MOON

PLATE 67

Rembrand. *Louvre, Paris*

ANGEL LEAVING TOBIAS

PLATE 68

Tintoretto *Scuola di San Rocco, Venice*

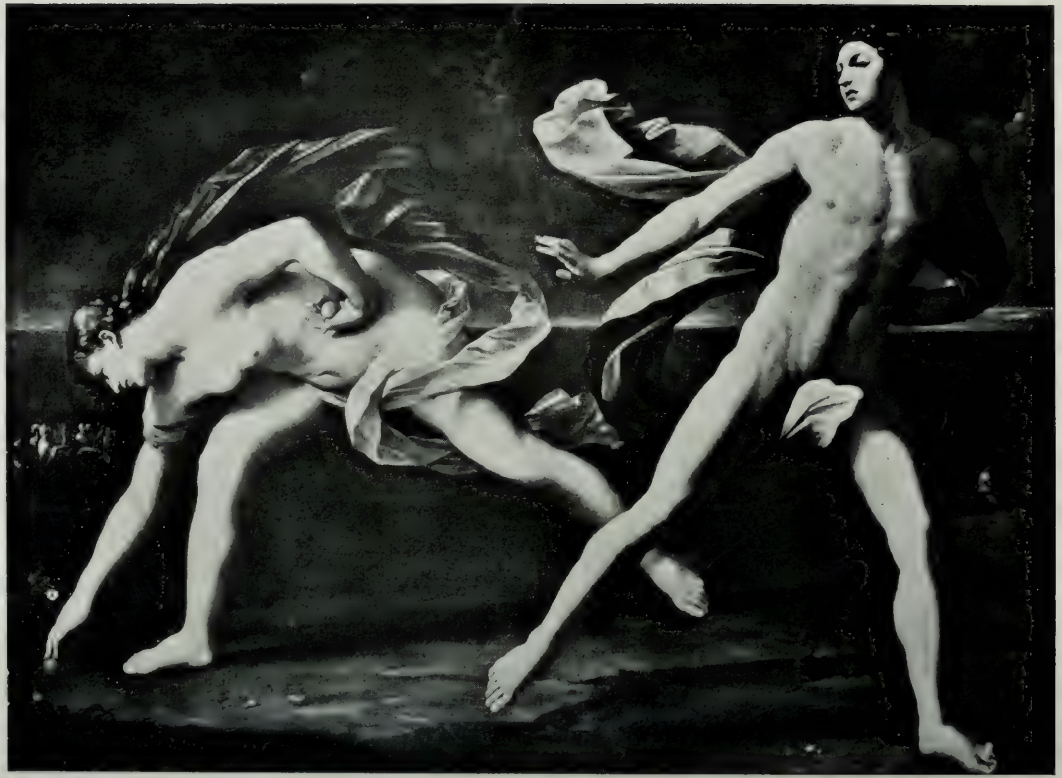
ANNUNCIATION

PLATE 69

Blake *Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge*

VISION OF ST. CATHERINE

PLATE 70



Guido Reni *Museum, Naples*

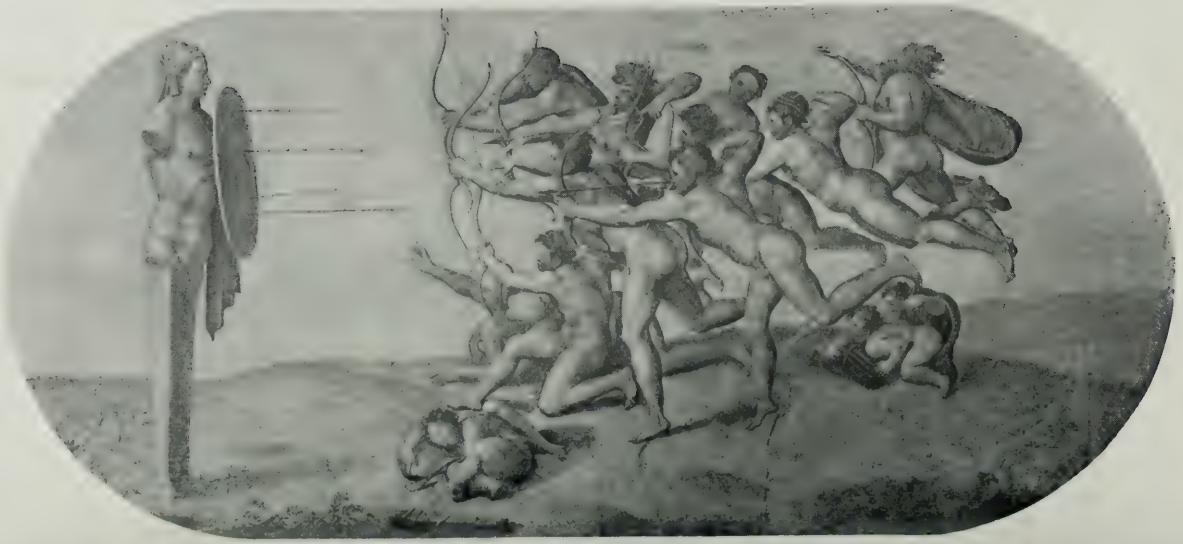
ATALANTA AND HIPPOMENES

PLATE 71

Cézanne *Louvre, Paris*

THE CARD PLAYERS

PLATE 72



Perino Del Vaga *Borghese, Rome*

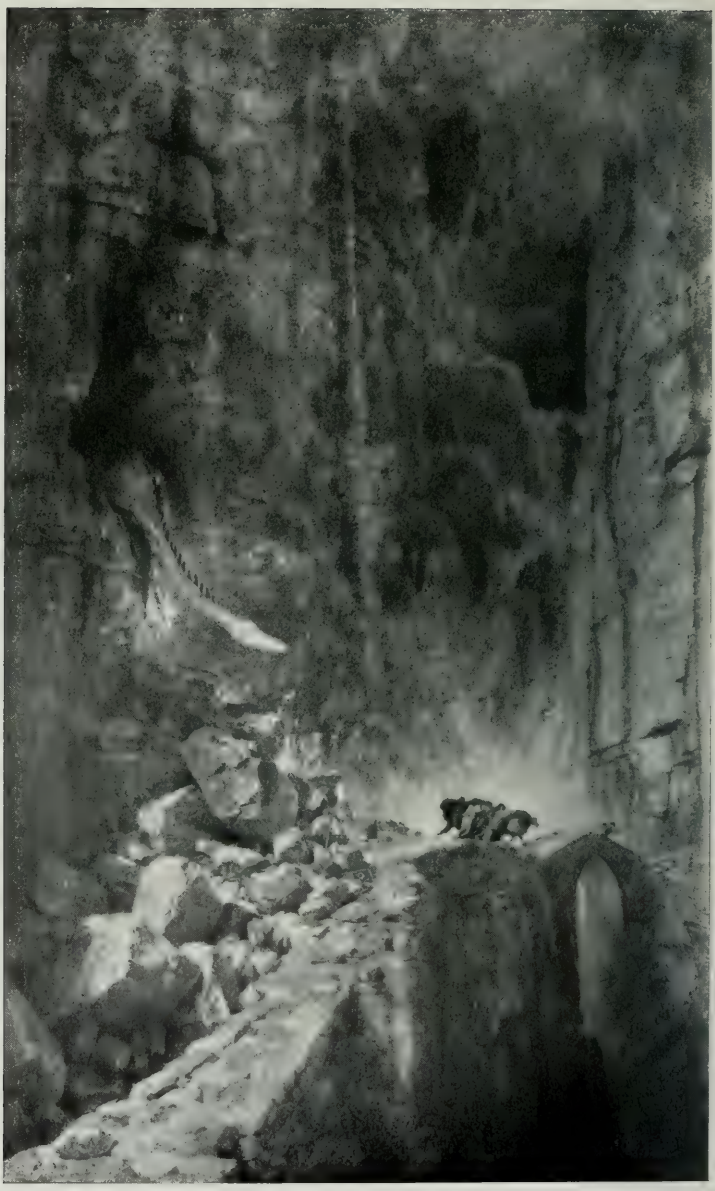
ARCHERS

PLATE 73

Tintoretto *Brera, Milan*

FINDING OF THE BODY OF ST. MARK

PLATE 74



Böcklin *Schack Gallery, Munich*

ROCKY GORGE

PLATE 75

Martin

THE OLD MANOR HOUSE AT CREQUEDOEUF

PLATE 76

Turner *London*

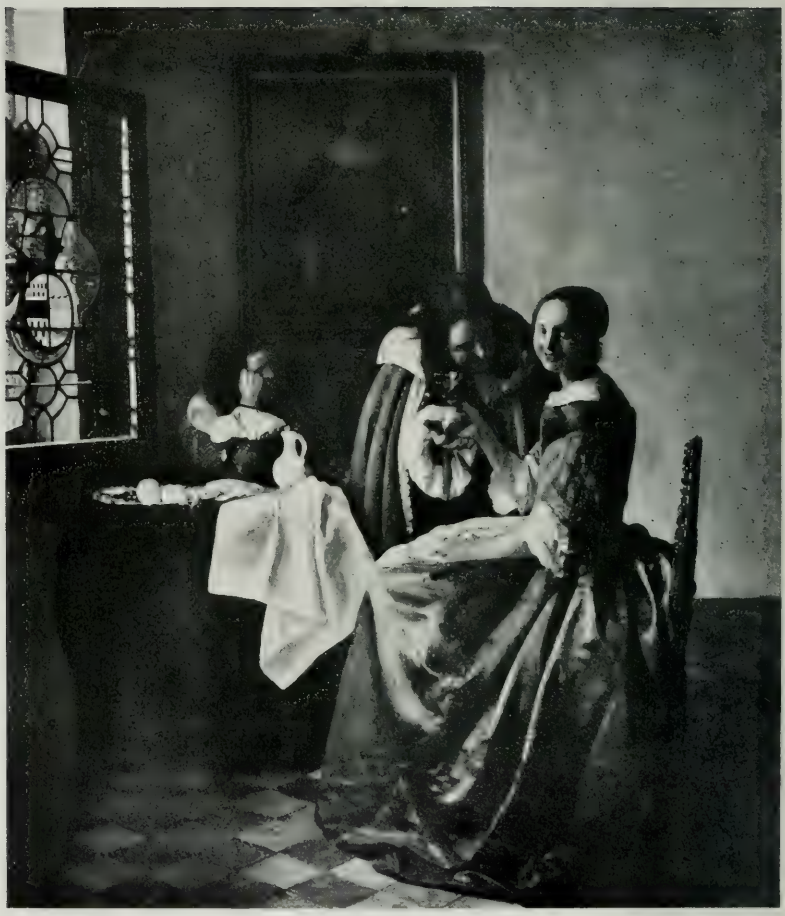
GARDEN OF THE HESPERIDES

PLATE 77

Hokusai

THE GREAT WAVE

PLATE 78



Vermeer *Brunswick*

GIRL WITH A WINEGLASS

PLATE 79

Terborch *Buckingham Palace, London*

THE LETTER

PLATE 80

Brouwer *Alte Pinakothek, Munich*

SPANISH SOLDIERS SHAKING DICE

PLATE 81

Hogarth *National Gallery, London*

MARRIAGE A-LA-MODE

PLATE 82

Degas *Louvre, Paris*

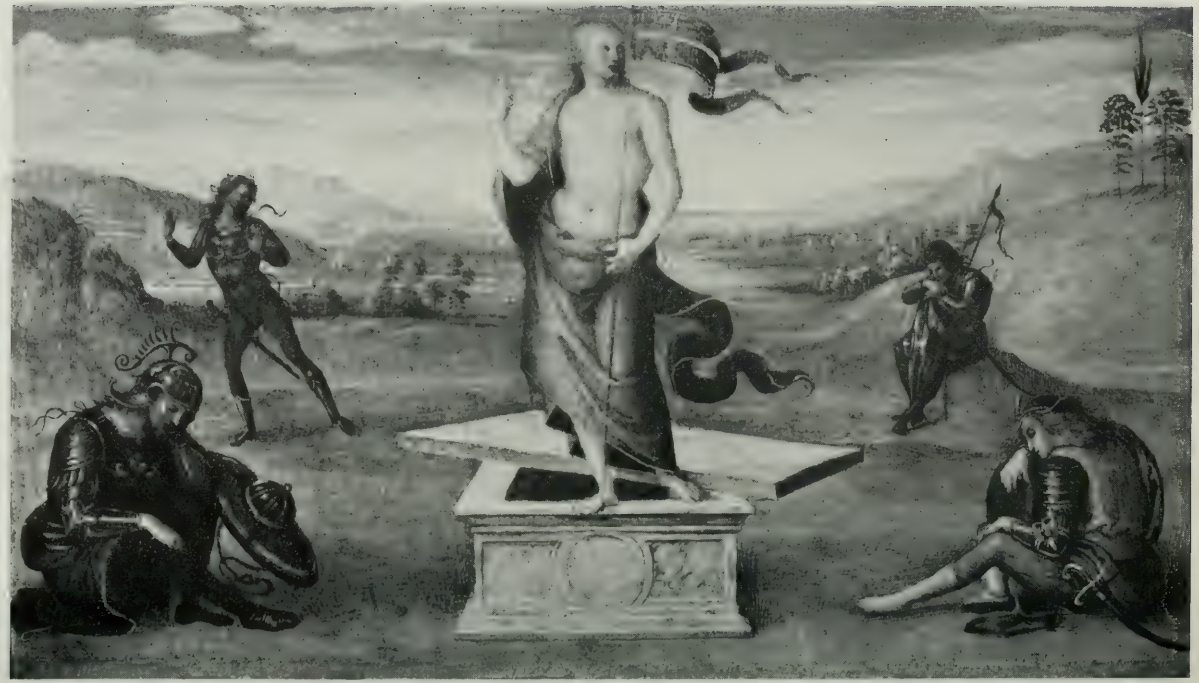
DANSEUSE ETOILE

PLATE 83

Dürer

CHRIST DESCENDING INTO HELL

PLATE 84



Perugino *Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*

THE RESURRECTION

PLATE 85

Watts

LOVE AND DEATH

PLATE 86